BING

Spring
2015

No. 169

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

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Membership renewals fall due on 1st. January each year and subscription rates effective for 2015 are:

USA and Canada	US $25 per annum
UK	£15 per annum
Mainland Europe, including Eire	£16 per annum
Australia and New Zealand	A$40 per annum
Rest of World	£18 per annum

All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::
(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

BING is the official journal of *The International Club Crosby* and is published in the spring, summer and winter of each year.

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to your first issue of BING magazine for 2015! As of this writing, we just finished watching the old year die with a fond goodbye, and our hopes (hopefully) still remain high as a kite. And what a year it was too, with an amazing fourth quarter that found Bing back in the media spotlight with the highly acclaimed American Masters program *Bing Crosby: Rediscovered* on PBS stations from coast to coast. Not to mention all of the fantastic new CD, DVD, and Blu-ray releases, too! I hope you've had a chance to view and listen to all of this new material...and that it hasn't left you with Bing overload (if there is such a thing). If you haven't taken the plunge and purchased these items as of yet, have no fear, there's more information on each of them later in this issue to further tempt you.

2015 marks the 40th anniversary of Bing's incredible "comeback". Though comeback is not really an accurate assessment, as Bing at the time was the first to admit he'd never really been gone. But 1975 marked a period of renewed activity, and renewed interest in Bing. In the first two months of the year alone, he recorded not one, but three major albums (A Southern Memoir, That's What Life Is All About, and, save for the title song, At My Time of Life). The latter two being the inaugural efforts with producer Ken Barnes and the Pete Moore Orchestra, a collaboration that served Bing well for the remaining two years of his life.

Will 2015 see parallels to 1975 and a similar spike as far as renewed interest in Bing is concerned? At this point, relatively early in the year, we can only speculate. But in my humble opinion, if the American Masters program, so masterfully produced and edited, can't accomplish the job of educating the public on just who Bing Crosby was, his many talents, and the never-to-be-duplicated feats he accomplished in his illustrious career, I'm not sure that anything can adequately do the job.

Greg Van Beek **tvanbeek@execpc.com**

Our congratulations and gratitude are due to Bing Crosby Enterprises and Robert Bader in particular for the tremendous exposure Bing obtained in the run-up to Christmas. As Greg has said, much of this focused on the superb PBS documentary *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* but the many new DVD and CD releases plus a special Crosby Christmas Internet Radio channel added to the impact. I cannot speak too highly about the PBS documentary. It's just what was needed to help re-launch Bing's name.

Bing enjoyed his usual seasonal renaissance in December and it was good to see ***White Christmas: The 60th Anniversary*** being shown at selected cinemas throughout the USA for a historic two-day celebration event on Sunday, December 14 and Monday, December 15.

This issue of BING magazine rightly gives pride of place to a consideration of the PBS documentary but in addition Greg Van Beek has an unusual offer for you in his article. All the regulars are here as usual and we also have interesting contributions from ICC members Anton Garcia-Fernandez, Perry Huntoon, Bruce Hanson and Roger Schore.

Michael, our Secretary / Treasurer, highlights possible future financial problems for the ICC in his article. The British Sinatra Music Society appears to be facing the same challenges. However they are still holding their annual convention whilst we are making this year our last official annual dinner / meeting in the UK. Something we lack which our Sinatra friends have in abundance are local groups which meet regularly but without the expense of an elaborate meal. Very difficult to arrange in the USA because of the vast distances involved but perhaps it's something that could be considered in the UK to replace the Leeds meeting.

In BING #167, John Newton told us about the rare Kraft Music Hall material he had purchased and he has kindly released this to be put on a CD by JSP Records. The ICC is purchasing a supply of 250 copies of the CD for issue to members at advantageous prices and we hope that members will strongly support this venture. It's a fascinating CD with the younger Bing in excellent voice. Our thanks go, not only to John Newton, but also to Geoff Milne who spent many hours mastering the tracks for us.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

As your secretary and treasurer it is incumbent on me to keep our finances under review and although the funds are healthy for 2015 there will not be sufficient surplus in 2016 for us to maintain 3 issues of BING unless subscriptions are raised or we consider other means of reducing our costs.

Members will notice in the accounts that subscriptions and donations this past year were £8,832 whilst the cost of printing, postage and administration rose to £11,727 thus leaving a shortfall of £2,895. In past years we have covered our costs since our membership was greater and we had surpluses from CD sales, calendar sales and several legacies and of course additional contributions from our members. Our membership declines each year, other sources of income are reducing and costs are rising so we must either increase our income or reduce our service (perhaps to 2 magazines per year or 3 magazines with less pages etc.)

Your present management team believe that members' first preference would be to retain the magazine in its present form and that the way to achieve this would be to increase subscriptions to reflect our anticipated costs from 2016 onwards. Wig, David and I will discuss this proposal and we will aim to keep the rise in subscriptions to a minimum. Any positive suggestions or alternate views from members would be most welcome.

In the lead up to Christmas it was heartening to see Bing Crosby Enterprises promoting their new releases including the acclaimed TV documentary. The documentary is very well constructed and handles the sensitive issue of Gary Crosby quite well whilst the rest of the footage covers Bing's career chronologically using superb quality film extracts with several shots appearing for the first time. Gary Giddins, Ken Barnes, Michael Feinstein and members of Bing's family are featured. I recommend that all members buy a copy for their collections.

My British 78s Collection

In my last report I referred to my delight in journeying to the Isle of Wight to pick up the 78rpm collection of our late and much respected member Leslie Gaylor.

Following the visit I was able to fill in many gaps in my collection and the pleasure has continued as my friend Ken Crossland has passed on his spares for me to comb through. I have been able to fill in more gaps and also improve the quality of some of the 78s which were in poor condition. Trevor Wagstaff has also helped me and I now require 33 discs to complete the UK total of 602. I would be very grateful to any member who could help me find the missing 78s including Bing's rarest English 10 inch 78 "Susianna" on Ariel 4364. As far as I am aware the only persons holding a copy of this disc are John Bassett, David More (not a member but a collector of Ariel records) and possibly the estates of the late members Charles Cowdery, Howard Levine and Jack Souther.

BING CALENDAR

Our "calendar lady" (Judy Wysokowski of Syracuse, New York) telephoned Wig early in January to report that she had discovered that the 2009 Crosby calendar can be used for 2015 by any club members who still have a copy in their collections. Members will recall that Judy spotted that the 2003 calendar could be used for 2014. So if you still have the 2009 calendar, you know what to do!

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to Simon Endacott of North Chingford in London who joined us in November.

DONATIONS

The ICC is very fortunate to have generous benefactors who consistently support the club with their financial contributions and we are delighted to acknowledge a

further very generous donation of £500 from **Sheila Rainey** gifted on behalf of her late sister Jean, a founder member of the British Bing Club in 1950. In support also are :-

UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND & EUROPE

Paul Hennessey, Frank Startup, Donald Bostock, John Salisbury, Roger Addey, John Benstead, John Byrd, Geoffrey Robinson, Michael Tyce, Frank Thompson, Tom Sim, Dennis Saville, Elizabeth Gregory, John Bignell, L Bates, Maurice Heywood, John Popey, Peter Hawkins, Doreen Claire Hubbard, Ken Shaw, Bob Halls, Ron Holder, Barbara Holmes, Matthew Sprott, Ian Patience, Lew Grassby, George Patmore, Michael Haefner, Gillian Stenning, Jim Reilly, Efer Cilas Dos Santos Jnr., Derrick Carter, Peter Jeffrey, Mike Mansley, Geoff White, Frans Van Der Kolff, Des Cusack, John Stiles, Geoff Vizard, Trevor Wagstaff, Leslie Mills, Charles Wilkinson, Tom Maher, Derek Perkins, Charles Campbell, Jonathan Cook, Anna Monaghan, Klaus Halm and Maureen Waters

This report has had to be prepared early in January because of holiday commitments. There will therefore be some names missing from the above list in respect of donations received after January 8th. These, and those for the USA and the rest of the world, will be acknowledged in our summer issue.

To all who give additional and generous gifts to the ICC we offer our grateful thanks.

DEATHS

Sadly, we have learned of the death of **Dr Christopher Linton** of Old Fleet Manor, Hayling Island, Hampshire, UK. Chris had reached the good age of 93 and always valued his membership of the ICC. We extend our sincere condolences to his relatives and friends.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Ireland and Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. Unfortunately, increased postage costs are having a noticeable impact on letters going to destinations outside the UK. Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 2 to 10

BING CROSBY in the Hall – Rare Live Recordings from KMH 1937 – 1946

BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors

BING CROSBY sings for the ARMED FORCES RADIO SERVICE

THE ROAD TO HONG KONG – SAY ONE FOR ME

LEEDS 2015 (50th meeting) - Sunday October 4th

This will be the final official Club tribute to Bing in Leeds and members' last opportunity to be present at what hopefully will be a great celebration. I urge all to note the date and please come along and share the fun with fellow enthusiasts and kindred spirits.

I must emphasise that this does not mean that the ICC is closing down. I do hope that there will continue to be meetings of ICC members and Malcolm and I will be delighted to attend and participate if possible. It is just not appropriate for the Club to underwrite an official meeting when such a low percentage of our total membership attends, a percentage that sadly (and inevitably) continues to reduce every year,

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31st DECEMBER 2014

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Subscriptions	6782	Production of BING magazine	11250
Donations	2050	AGM (Leeds) costs	672
Legacies	520	Secretarial costs	371
Leeds meeting - receipts	763	CDs - costs	334
Sales – Books / back issues	127	Editorial costs	106
Sales – CDs	1269	Postage – books/back issues	33
		Returned cheques	27
		Publicity	100
Bank balance 31/12/2013	14498	Bank balance 31/12/2014	13116
	26009		26009

Note:

1. The accounts are a simple unaudited Income and Expenditure summary. Amounts owing and stocks of books and CDs held are not shown. Funds held on a temporary basis by the various international representatives are not shown either.
2. The club is able to cover its anticipated expenditure in 2015.

Michael Crampton. Secretary/Treasurer

In Memory of Marie Mohr-Grandstaff

Bob and Lenora Pasch send a special tribute.

Marie Mohr-Grandstaff was a member of The Club. She passed on July 7, 2014. Marie was married to Kathryn Crosby's brother Del. She was a very caring person and shared her talents with friends and her community.

Marie was raised in a farming community of Wichita, Kansas, one of 18 children. She launched her career by working for the International Grail Women's Movement. For 7 years she lived overseas teaching English and Religion in Indonesia where she became an expert in their culture and language.

As a mastery of languages she took a position at Stanford University teaching Indonesian language for 10 years. She capped off her accomplished career with a prestigious assignment with the U.S. State Department as an Indonesian language interpreter and translator in Java and Bali.

Del and Marie were married in Napa, CA, in June 1989. They remained very devoted to each other until Del's death in December 2003. The Harp Foundation became a major part of Marie's life after Del's death and she took up the harp at age 78 and became a member of this organization giving of her time to play her harp in hospitals and care units.

Marie with Bob Pasch

Marie was an author, lecturer, and translator of several books completing a book on her life, "Marie's Journey of Love," ** which was published only months before her death. Most of all she shared her love with those around her. My wife, Lenora, and I were honored to know both Del and Marie and had the privilege of performing with Kathryn Crosby at a memorial in Del's honor and sharing a day with Kathryn at a memorial for Marie. Marie enriched the lives of everyone that knew her.

Rest in Peace Marie.

Bob & Lenora Pasch

** If interested, Marie's book is available on-line at Inkwell Productions.

BING CROSBY REDISCOVERED

This excellent documentary was shown on PBS in December and was also issued on DVD. It's the best one your Editor has ever seen about Bing. The top-class contributions from Michael Feinstein, Gary Giddins and Ken Barnes plus those from the family made the story very compelling indeed. I loved Mary Crosby's forthright views!

The media blitz prior to its broadcast was amazing with comments and reviews appearing all over the media. One of the most satisfying aspects to your editor was the decision to confront the Gary Crosby book head-on. I had always felt that it was a mistake to ignore it and hope that it would go away. When I met Phillip Crosby a few years before his death, I encouraged him to put out a press release refuting his brother's book and this he duly did. Now the second family have at last added their weight and let us hope that this documentary helps to re-draw Bing's image. Incidentally, it was very sad to see some incredibly nasty comments on social media about Bing's treatment of his first family prior to the transmission of the documentary and I trust that these will now cease.

There were very many reviews and articles about *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* and we can reproduce only a few. Let's start with some extracts from an interesting interview with our President, Kathryn Crosby, seen in *Smashing Interviews* magazine on December 1.

...Bing Crosby was, without a doubt, the most popular and influential multimedia star of the first half of the 20th century, and now the public and his fans can learn much more about the icon in a new documentary, American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered, which premieres nationwide Tuesday, December 2 at 8:00 pm on PBS. The film explores the life and legend of this iconic performer, revealing a man far more complex than his public persona. Narrated by Stanley Tucci, the film features new interviews with all surviving members of Crosby's immediate family: wife Kathryn, daughter Mary and sons Harry and Nathaniel.

Kathryn Crosby: Have you seen the special yet? I hope you liked it.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*):

Yes, I enjoyed it very much. What did *you* think?

Kathryn Crosby: I thought it was *excellent*. I really hope everyone enjoys this film because they have all the movies from our basement that they are using lots of early films of Bing, and it's just wonderful!

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): As a movie buff, I *loved* seeing clips from the old films. Some of Bing Crosby's fans may not know that you are also an actor. Is that something you always wanted to do?

Kathryn Crosby: Absolutely, from the time that I was about three, I wanted to be an actress. We had a twelve-grade schoolhouse, and anytime there was a senior high school play, and they needed a child, I was elected. I loved it. I *always* loved acting.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): You had a role in 1959's *Anatomy of a Murder*, groundbreaking during that time because it was one of the first films to address sex and rape in fairly graphic terms. How was the experience working with director Otto Preminger?

Kathryn Crosby: Working with Otto Preminger was *amazing*. He had a reputation for being such an ogre. I went into his office, and my agents were there, and his lawyers were there, and I said, "How do you do?" I took a letter for my purpose. It was from my gynecologist, and it said, "She will be able to work for five months." I asked Otto Preminger, "Is this a problem?" Otto said, "No. Actually there are a couple of advantages."

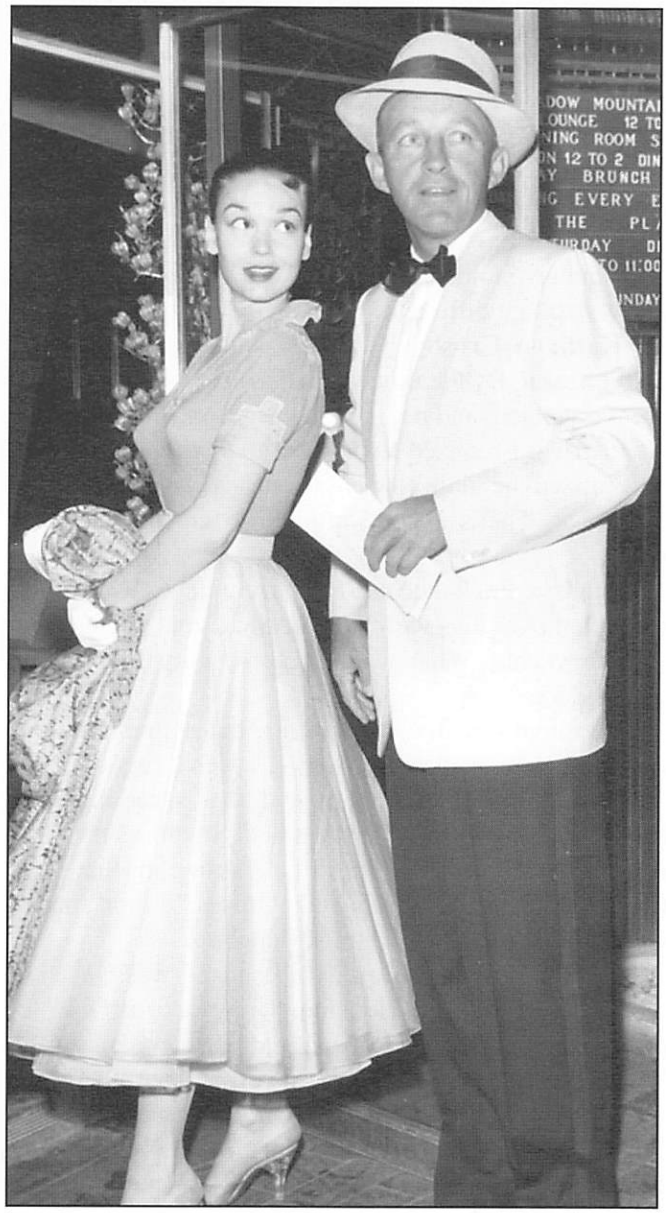
Otto and I became very good friends after that. We shot the movie in Ishpeming, Michigan. *Anatomy of a Murder* was written by Robert Traver, and he taught me how to fly fish on the river that was covered with bush on the sides. It's a rolling cast that you do. He and Bing had a long discussion about ten pound test and all of that. I had a great adventure.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): A few years earlier, you appeared in Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954).

Kathryn Crosby: *Rear Window* was shot when I was first at Paramount Pictures. I had a very little role in that, but I got to see Jimmy Stewart for the first time, and Grace Kelly had a wonderful role. Getting to know Paramount Pictures was quite amazing. Then a year and a half later, the "golden circle" of talented young performers was let go, and I went right to Columbia Pictures.

They were not afraid of television. They were working in television, so I got to do a lot of short films. I loved that. It was really a *working* place. I not only got my diploma from the University of Texas, I got to work with excellent people like Elsa Lanchester and Cecil Kellaway and got to be directed by Paul Henreid on whom I had a crush from the time I was a little girl. It was an amazing experience!

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): And then came Bing …



Bing and Kathryn enjoy a night out in Palm Springs in 1958

Kathryn Crosby: I had *lots* of experiences all this time, and I met Bing Crosby. We kept meeting each other, and then we'd plan to get married, and he would have a kidney stone or something dreadful like that. We kept waiting, and I kept working. Later on, we finally managed to get married which was a secret. I hadn't spoken to him for a year, and he wrote to me and asked me to go to dinner. I said, "Yes. I still love you. No. I won't see you."

When we got together in Las Vegas, Aunt Mary was with me, and Bing was with his driver, Leo Lynn, and we went to the courthouse and got our license. The reporters stopped us outside and asked Bing, "Are you going to marry Miss Grant?" He said, "Why yes. We're going up to Arrington. There's a priest friend of mine up there

who's going to perform the service." The reporters ran off.

Bing and I drove a block and a half to the Catholic Church, and we were married there. Afterward, Leo said, "Don't you think you better tell the press? It's a hot day, and they're going to be driving seven hours to get up to Arrington." We went to the Sands Hotel and had a little breakfast with just us and Father Ryan and forty reporters.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Did you have to deal with all of the questions about the thirty-year age difference?

Kathryn Crosby: I suppose that happened, but I didn't hear it. By the time we had courted, I knew I liked him very much, and he liked me very much. By the time we married, I realized I could survive without him, and he realized he didn't *want* to survive without me. I liked that. That's a good attitude to enter a marriage with.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Bing won over fans with his laid-back, cool persona and smooth vocals. What was his personality like behind closed doors?

Kathryn Crosby: He was shy, but not with me. He had a great *tolerance* for people. I was a reporter, too, when I was first at Paramount, and I had asked him if he liked horses because I was "Miss Fat Stock" as the 1950 Rodeo Queen of the Fat Stock show in that year (laughs). Bing said, "Yeah. I like horses." I didn't know he had built Del Mar racetrack (laughs).

I asked if he liked baseball because I was Queen of the Texas Buffalos in Houston. They went to Ohio for the national convention of baseball owners. Bing said, "Yeah. I like baseball a lot." I didn't know he *owned* the Pirates. He was a part owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates. My mother got to go to one of the World Series games, and it was very exciting. Bing was very tolerant, though, of my large, expansive idiocy. Where are *you* from?

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Birmingham, Alabama.

Kathryn Crosby: The first movie I made that was exciting was *The Phenix City Story*. The morning after the Academy Awards, which was my first outed date with Bing, I flew to Phenix City and did that movie with Richard Kiley. It was a very good movie, and I loved living in Alabama during that time.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): That was a very interesting film noir also. Mrs. Crosby, how would you describe your married relationship with Bing?

Kathryn Crosby: He loved me, and I knew it. He didn't always say it, but he *always* showed it. He loved strong women. His mother absolutely *ran* their family. If I ever felt strongly enough about something to ask him, he always did it. There was never even any discussion, and I'm very grateful for that.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Did you ever have to worry about Bing and his female co-stars becoming more than friends?

Kathryn Crosby: No. I knew when I met Bing that every woman in the world loved him, and every man in the world wanted to go hunting with him and wanted to be his buddy or play golf with him like Bob did. He had lots of girlfriends, and he had lots of boyfriends, and he was always a very *good* friend.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Rosemary Clooney was one of his best friends?

Kathryn Crosby: Absolutely. She was his very dearest friend, and they sang so perfectly together.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): In a new Bob Hope biography that came out in November, the author states, "Bob told a friend he simply didn't like Bing, and at times, detested him." *(Editor: see Books 'N' Bing later in this issue).*

Kathryn Crosby: That is not true!

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): In the documentary, it does say that Bob and Bing seldom or never socialized together.

Kathryn Crosby: Well, Bob Hope *worked* all the time. Bing was quite lazy. He loved to play. He took Bob salmon fishing up in Canada once, and they had just pulled off to sea when Bob said, "I have to go back in." Bing asked, "Why?" Bob said, "Fish don't applaud." Bob and Bing spent an hour a day on the phone. They exchanged jokes always.

We lived with them when Bing was doing *Road to Hong Kong*. We rented a place called Cranbourne Court, and our two families lived together. Bob was there with his four children, and I was there with our son Harry. We left Mary Frances at home, but I was expecting Nathaniel at the time. In fact, I was sent home two weeks early because I wouldn't have been allowed to get on a plane any later. They didn't like delivering babies on airplanes back then. We had a wonderful time together.

Dolores and I became very good friends at that time, and I traveled all over Europe with her while Bing and Bob were working. They only worked to about 3:00 in the afternoon, and then they'd go play golf until twilight and come home for dinner. We traveled to Florence and Rome with a Jesuit priest, Father Brooks, and actually Dolores' car had to break down in front of the Vatican because Father Brooks would not have been able to go in at that time since he was a Jesuit without permission from the Black Pope who was the head of his Order. But since Dolores' car broke down in front, we were able to go in and look around. It was quite a lovely experience.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Did Bing and Bob like doing the "Road" pictures?

Kathryn Crosby: They loved them! Bing and Bob started off together in early vaudeville. Bob was the emcee for a vaudeville show, and Bing was singing, and they started playing with each other on the stage. They would start the "Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean" remarks,

and then they'd tell the jokes. A few years later, Bob came to Hollywood, and they were *very* good friends at that time.

Bing invited Bob to Del Mar to the racetrack. After the end of the last race, they'd go up and have dinner together. There was a good piano player there, so they would do some songs and dances and remarks from the New York vaudeville show. People were there from Paramount, and one big executive producer said, "They're very good together. Why don't we write some movies for them?" Dolores thought that was pretty funny, and everybody thought it would be a good idea.

That's what started the "Road" shows. Bing and Bob *never* worked on them. There was a lovely man called Barney Dean, and he was called a gagman. He would just hang around the set, and then he'd go over to Bing and say, "Look, when Bob comes in for this scene, why don't you do this?" Then he'd go to Bob and say, "Look, when Bing comes in here, why don't you do this?" Then the director would yell "Action!" They would start. The director was about to get really cross because none of the written script was used, but all of the people who were working on the show were so tickled and laughing so hard, he'd say, "I think that's good. We'll print that. Let's go on to the next scene." They had a wonderful time.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Did you and Bing raise your children in the Catholic faith?

Kathryn Crosby: Yes. I was reared a Baptist, and in high school, my aunt and uncle were Methodists, so I went to the Methodist Church, but then there were no Baptists on the west coast. I went to Europe and went to the Christmas Day Mass at Sacré-Coeur, and it was so beautiful. The music and artwork were beautiful, and though I couldn't understand it, the Latin sounded so pretty.

I came back to Austin and finished up my degree and took my Inquiry classes for six weeks. The priest said, "You should wait a while." I said, "You can't keep me out." He said, "You're right. I can't keep you out." So I was baptized and graduated from school, and then went to marry Bing in the same week. Then something happened. Things were always happening that were desperate, but it wasn't anything that Bing had done. It was something that one of his boys had done, and it was really frightening.

A year later, the same *kind* of thing happened. I decided that if it's not *supposed* to be, it wouldn't be. The church was really very helpful at that time. I met good friends there. I got to be a friend of the Immaculate Heart nuns after that, and it made it possible for me to *bear* life without him. Then we got married, which was very good.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Gary accused his father of horrible physical abuse in a memoir released after Bing's death, and there appeared to be a lot of turmoil in his first marriage and with their four sons. Did you know about those relationship problems?

Kathryn Crosby: Nobody knows about that really because Bing never talked to me about that, and all he ever said about Dixie was that she was a wonderful mother and that she was an angel. He felt that way about her. I don't know what Gary's problems were, but he'd had them from the time he was a little boy. Gary hated his brothers, Phillip and Dennis, the twins, and Lindsay who was a *wonderful* young man.

One of the reasons Bing and I didn't get married one of the times was that Bing was watching carefully over Lindsay hoping he'd get off to college. He got off to college for about six weeks, and Gary said to him, "Your girlfriend's waiting for you, and your car's in the garage. Come on home." So Lindsay left Brown University, which was too bad. I think I would've been the worst mother in the world if my kids were not good kids or they weren't going to grow up. That's my job.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): What was Bing's relationship with the children you had together (Harry, Mary and Nathaniel)?

Kathryn Crosby: He was the *best* father. I think our kids were wish fulfillment because Bing taught Harry to play golf and to hunt, and he taught Nathaniel to play golf. He took Mary Frances hunting in Africa. There were so many experiences he gave his first boys. Harry said, "I would've killed to get to go with Louis Armstrong to Australia," which was an experience that Bing gave to Gary. Gary got drunk there and had to be sent home, which was so bad. That was so sad. Harry would've loved to have that experience, but he made his own experiences.

Bing teaches young Harry to play golf

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): You continued your acting career after you and Bing married?

Kathryn Crosby: Yes. When we married, I asked Bing if I could continue my acting, and if I could continue my nursing. Bing said, "I didn't know you wanted to be a nurse." I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay. Whatever you want. That's fine." So I continued, but then he was *very* uncomfortable when I was away acting. I would do it in the summertime. I could do summer stock, and I loved it. I had more fun doing that. Then the children did it with me, and we had a good time.

Later on, Bing asked me, "Would you like to do this show with me in Las Vegas?" He'd never done a show in Las Vegas. Bing said, "There's a priest who doesn't have a church, and if we do this one show, I think it'll help him get that church." The priest had been doing Mass in a topless bar, so we did a show in Las Vegas. Bing said that we'd have to rehearse there to go to Broadway. I said, "What?" Bing had decided to do a show to help a foundation sponsoring music scholarships for young people. We had two weeks on Broadway, and it was lovely.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Mrs. Crosby, had Bing been sick, or was his death a surprise?

Kathryn Crosby: It was a *terrible* surprise, but he had, of course, been sick. He'd had four kidney stones. Once we were supposed to go to England to see his horse run in the Royal Sweeps derby and come by this house where I'm living in now to see it. It was halfway finished then. Bing said, "I don't feel well." We went to the hospital, and they admitted him because he had kidney stones in *both* kidneys. It was very frightening to know which one they were going to operate on because you have to have one functioning kidney when you're operating on the other. It was much more complicated then.

We did that, and then later on, Bing was hurt in a terrible accident at the Ambassador on his 50th anniversary show. He took a step back, and the floor had been lowered, so he fell fifty feet onto a concrete floor. We got him to the hospital, and they said, "There are no broken bones. I'm sure you're okay." Bing said, "But I can't walk." It had swollen so much, he couldn't walk. I asked my doctor what could be done, and he said, "Well, you can stay and worry, and it'll take six weeks, or you can go away and worry, and it'll take six weeks, but in six weeks, he'll be able to walk again." We went through that.

Bing had a long surgery where they had to remove a large tumor the size of a grapefruit which was interesting because it was Nocardia which is half bacteria and half fungus that he probably got in Africa. He loved safaris and loved being in the bush seeing the wild animals. Bing had certain health problems, but after we did the Christmas show at the London Palladium, we traveled to Manchester and Brighton, and then he went to Spain to shoot grouse with a good friend.

Before they went to the place where they would be shooting, they played a round of golf. At the end of the game, Bing's friend, Cesar de Zulueta asked him, "How do you feel?" Bing said, "I'm fine. It's not too steep. It's not heavy." He took one more step and then fell dead. They had finished the eighteen holes of golf, and Bing won ten dollars with his pro. He did love his golf.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): You remarried in 2000?

Kathryn Crosby: Dr. Sullivan was my trustee, and he had a heart that did a tango. We realized he had to get some very serious examinations in Hillsborough, and we met Dr. Poon there, and he showed us an instrument, which had the blood going back and forth in the heart. It was either he was going to have to get an operation, or he was going to die in three days. We were married at that time because I was going to have to nurse him in the hospital, and that's a public appearance. You can't go there with a quiet trustee, so we were married, and fortunately, he overcame that. They did a very fine surgery on him and repaired all his valves. He had no place to have a valve, so they had to create a place for a valve, and he lived for ten more years. That was very good.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): I understand you recently had a birthday on November 25, so happy belated!

Kathryn Crosby: Actually my sister, who is four years older, and I are changing our birthdays this year to May because in May, the Crosby golf tournament takes place. Then we're going down to New Orleans where my granddaughter, Claire, who is studying to be a chef, is interning with chef John Folse at the Sonesta Hotel, and we're going to have a birthday dinner there in May. We want to get some quail and some very special southern dishes.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): New Orleans is one of the best places in the world to experience fine dining!

Kathryn Crosby: Oh yes.

Melissa Parker (*Smashing Interviews Magazine*): Many people associate Bing Crosby with the yuletide season primarily because of his TV specials, the 1954 film, *White Christmas*, and the hit single of the same name. Are the holidays difficult for you?

Kathryn Crosby: It is a *wonderful* time for me. Last year, I did a cabaret in New York out on the island to benefit a school, and I sang several songs. My son, Harry, played "The Christmas Song," and then I did a cabaret at the Lincoln Center.

Christmas is very much a part of my life. The weather is so good, and we're starting to decorate just about now. The family is coming here this Christmas. It'll probably be one of the last Christmases because our

kids have grown children, and they're always moving, but they will be here this year. It's a wonderful time.

Melissa Parker

Another quote about the PBS documentary by Kathryn I particularly liked was contained in a *Chicago Sun-Times* article by Miriam Di Nunzio on December 5

> Asked to describe her husband as only she could, Kathryn said: "I'd have to say he was very humble and modest. He really didn't know what a star he was. And he was so handsome with those big blue eyes and really didn't know it. I think this movie will set the record straight. He was such a funny man. He never went out of his way to be mean to anybody. He was the kindest man I've ever known. He was the man I loved. We had 20 years together, which was so good."

The PBS Documentary was directed by Emmy award-winning director Robert Trachtenberg and he was interviewed for the *We Make Movies* LA film collective. The video of this was put on YouTube and I circulated the link to all those members whose email addresses I had so that they could watch it. In an absolutely enthralling 55 minutes, Robert described how he had discovered that 1000's of Bing's Dictabelt (an early Dictaphone) recordings were stored in the basement of the Hillsborough home. The ability to use Bing's voice to outline his career was very attractive. He also came across the recordings done with Pete Martin for *Call Me Lucky* but sadly the sound quality was not good enough for them to be used.

Robert stressed how Bing was the most popular person in the world at the end of the WWII but has fallen out of favour because of the Gary Crosby book. Trachtenberg said that not many people bought the book but the worst parts of it were published in *People* magazine and the newspapers picked it up. Bing's second family chose not to do any damage control at the time and as a result Bing's image was hurt almost beyond retrieval. Robert says that his film tells the truth about Bing and clearly he hopes that a new generation will discover him. He indicated that two of the children of Bing's first marriage were probably damaged by Dixie's drinking and suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome. (This is a pattern of physical and mental defects that can develop in a fetus in association with high levels of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.)

Moving on, Robert discussed how Bing had not only helped Judy Garland and Rosemary Clooney at crucial stages of their careers but many other people too. He was incredibly loyal to his associates.

Putting the documentary together was clearly a very expensive exercise particularly the clips used from films. The "clip licensing" department of the studio has to make a profit and it's no good saying that using them will sell more DVDs as that income goes to the Home Entertainment division, a separate profit centre. There's no synergy at the studios apparently.

The researcher for the documentary - Amy Schireson - had tracked down rabid collectors who had rare items and Robert smiled as he described that many of them did not have computers, scanners or even cell phones. (Undoubtedly ICC members!) Robert said that Bing Crosby Enterprises had told him that Bing remains incredibly popular overseas but not in the USA. He pointed out the bizarre puritanical double standards where they say "Oh, he hit his kids" but when you talk to individuals they say "but my dad spanked me." Trachtenberg stressed that Bing admitted throughout his life that he had not been a successful father to his first four boys and was totally honest about it.

Robert stated that the documentary could easily have been 4 hours long but he feels that it really moves at 90 minutes.

Members' reactions to the interview were unanimously positive.

> **John Walton** Many thanks for distributing this. Absolutely superb! A thoughtful, highly informative interview which I hope will whet a lot of appetites for the documentary. Only one complaint: I had to watch the interview from beginning to end! I've usually got through most of the 'Sunday Times' by this time on Sunday morning. It's totally confused the dog that it's lying there unopened! I'm now playing catch up for the rest of the day.

> **Alan Matheson** Many thanks for this link. I've missed the PBS documentary so far but ordered the DVD which will be a better experience, in any case, since the show won't be interrupted with the dreaded Public Television "pledge drive" campaigns. I've ordered all the new Bing CDs and am looking forward to listening to them now that my teaching term is over for the season. We're fortunate that BCE is taking matters in hand and issuing (and reissuing) so much music by Bing these days.

> **Jon Oye** I supplied several magazine covers and ads, and helped their researcher ID some celebs in old photos. My modest claim to fame. There was a "thanks" section in the broadcast cut. Unfortunately, it's not in the DVD version. By the way, at 22:55 Trachtenberg is referring to me — though we had no direct contact. His researcher, Amy Schireson, emailed me back in June to ask if I had a hi-res scan of a photo they were searching for. I didn't, but was able to track down an original (1936) publicity still of the image for them on eBay. It ended up being used on the poster and DVD cover for the finished documentary.

> **Neil Colombari** Thanks Malcolm - a great interview. It's interesting to hear about the process of how the documentary came together along with some behind the scenes details.

Alice Kane Thank you so much for sending this along. I loved it!

On 11-22-14 I slipped on some black ice in our driveway, fell and broke my left ankle. I had surgery and am in a cast until 12-23-14. I have been claustrophobic all my life and the cast is causing me to have panic attacks. Being able to distract myself for an hour, watching this fascinating documentary was a real gift from you!

I have purchased the American Masters' *Bing Crosby: Rediscovered* DVD and am expecting delivery soon. Will get the accompanying cd at a later date.

Again, thank you so much, Malcolm!

Frank Startup Thanks for forwarding the interview with the maker of 'American Masters' - fascinating, and good to hear Crosby being given his due at last. Let's hope it makes a difference. I'm really looking forward to the programme.

Rod Owen Thank you so much for your email links. Quite remarkable. As a result I have just ordered the "American Masters" CD. What an insightful interview with the Director that was. BING #168 was as usual my essential reading or the week.

Stephen Battaglio writing in *TV GUIDE* Magazine on December 1st extracted some more fascinating information from Mr. Trachtenberg.

Bing Crosby

Whenever director Trachtenberg tells people he's made a film about Bing Crosby, he says, "The overwhelming response is, 'He's the guy who hit his kids.'" The actor-crooner's Daddy Dearest image was shaped by the 1983 tell-all memoir from son Gary. But Trachtenberg believes *Bing*, his latest project for *American Masters* (Tuesday at 8/7c on PBS), will remind viewers that despite his flaws, Crosby is one of the 20th century's most influential pop culture figures.

The baritone was the first to develop a singing style with electronic amplification in mind and brought subtlety and sophistication to pop music in the 1930s. His 41 No. 1 records, hit radio show and Road movies with Bob Hope made him America's first multimedia phenomenon. For viewers who grew up with Crosby's bland Christmas TV specials that aired in the 1960s and '70s, Trachtenberg says the performer's early years will be a revelation. "I thought of him as an old man in the cardigan," he says. "The Crosby we need is the relaxed cool, hip Crosby." Trachtenberg shared some insights about his subject with The Biz.

TV Guide Magazine: Bing Crosby died in 1977 and we really haven't heard much about him outside of his son's book in the 1980s. How did his widow and surviving children from his second marriage let such a giant star fade from public memory?

Robert Trachtenberg: Bing had taught them: "Keep your head low, keep under the radar, don't draw attention to yourself." So when he died, they thought he was beloved, he was an institution, and that was enough. By their own admission, they were wrong. They also thought the music would live on its own. They didn't know they had to be more proactive, which they are now, luckily. When Frank Sinatra died, his family had a plan in place pretty quickly and they had been very smart in merchandising his name and image.

TV Guide Magazine: Was it hard to get the trust of the family? How did you get them to understand that you were going to tell the complete story?

Trachtenberg: The good thing about *American Masters* is the subject's heirs don't have editorial approval. The people who run the estate for the Crosbys showed them my films on Cary Grant and Gene Kelly, where some sensitive issues were touched on. They were like "he can do it. He's the guy." Truly, they couldn't have been nicer. They wanted the truth out there because it's been 30 plus years of just misinformation. They wanted it cleared up.

TV Guide Magazine: Even before Gary's book, Crosby talked about how he was a harsh disciplinarian.

Trachtenberg: A couple of people have now come forward, including Bing's daughter Mary in the movie, and said Gary embellished the abuse for the publisher or for the press. We show it in the film. Bing never hid from the public what was going on. He gave interviews where he said, "Something has gone wrong, and I've been a terrible father. I've tried really hard and I don't know. Essentially, I'm a failure as a father with the first group of boys."

Bing visits Gary on the *Mardi Gras* film set in 1958.

TV Guide Magazine: In terms of his own career, Crosby seems like he was pretty laid back. He was

arguably more influential than Sinatra. But Sinatra really eclipsed him in terms of being the representative talent of that generation.

Trachtenberg: They weren't the same generation because Bing's height was the '30s and '40s. Then Sinatra really kicked in during the '50s. In a way, the mantle had been passed to Sinatra and he ran with it.

TV Guide Magazine: But as a singer, Sinatra gets a lot more respect than Bing Crosby.

Trachtenberg: The hard truth is Sinatra took more care with his arrangements by hooking up with Nelson Riddle and all those great arrangers that he used on his albums. He was more involved. With Bing, there was a real natural gift. He loved to harmonize with these other people but he just didn't take that much care with the arrangements.

TV Guide Magazine: It's great that the film includes a deep dive into "The Little Drummer Boy" duet Crosby did with David Bowie on a Christmas special. Growing up, we all thought that clip was hilarious.

Trachtenberg: I thought it was hilarious. The funny thing about that is everyone thinks it's hilarious and camp. Then they watch it, and they're like, "They're actually really good together." Bowie did it because his mom loved Bing Crosby.

TV Guide Magazine: The interesting revelation in the film is that Bowie refused to sing "Little Drummer Boy" and the producers had to write special material for him on the spot. Yet his part sounds like a traditional Christmas hymn.

Trachtenberg: Exactly. It's a real tribute to those guys and their musicianship and their ability to work together.

Stephen Battaglio

The *Wall Street Journal* of November 28 looked at the documentary too.

Recalling Bing Crosby

'American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered' traces the impact of his exceptional style, his occasionally troubled domestic life and his boundless generosity.

Among the innumerable intriguing facts about Bing Crosby in this "American Masters" documentary is one that attests to his resistance to romantic declarations he considered mawkish. He wanted nothing to do with songs requiring him to sing "I love you" or anything like it. A commentator on this all-encompassing, frank and undisguised tribute of a film observes that Crosby was at home only with indirect expressions of romantic feeling and his writers knew it. With lines like "Love is lovelier the second time around," for instance (music by Jimmy Van Heusen and words by Sammy Cahn).

Still he packed into that indirection, that relaxed voice with its golden phrasing, the kind of emotional power that could turn an Irving Berlin song about Christmas snow into the best-selling record of all time, and one that made grown men cry. In his own life he had, in fact, found love lovelier the second time around, lovelier than with a first marriage to a wife who had battled alcoholism, unsuccessfully, all their married life. His relations with the four sons of that marriage were rocky. One of his sons would write a memoir, in 1983, accusing his father of psychological and physical abuse—sensational charges especially in light of the warm and easygoing persona the world had come to associate with Bing Crosby.

In this film, that persona is restored, and more. There are details of what he did, quietly, for women in the entertainment world who had run into trouble, among them Judy Garland, whom he coaxed out of isolation after a suicide attempt and brought trembling before his vast radio audience. He put himself out, similarly, to help Rosemary Clooney when she fell on hard times.

Crosby was everywhere, entertaining U.S. servicemen endlessly during World War II, much like Bob Hope. He was aware of the emotional effect of "White Christmas"—when he sang it, he reported, he could see the tears in the eyes of the Americans far from home. The song had become, now, a kind of anthem.

Writer-producer Robert Trachtenberg and a splendid assortment of commentators (Stanley Tucci narrates) have infused the film with insight and clarity, no small achievement considering the length of Crosby's career—that's in addition to the feast of film clips and all those songs.

Dorothy Rabinowitz

Susan King writing in the prestigious *Los Angeles Times* on November 29 had more.

Bing Crosby, a guy who could do it all

"Bing Crosby Rediscovered" celebrates the entertainer's career triumphs and explores long-resonating allegations of abuse made by one of his sons.

Tops in recording, film and radio — that was Bing Crosby, the subject of a PBS documentary.

Bing Crosby described himself simply as 'an average guy who could carry a tune.'

Mary Crosby says of PBS documentary about Bing Crosby, 'I think it's an honest portrayal of who Dad was'

Bing Crosby is probably best known these days for the rendition of the Oscar-winning Irving Berlin tune "White Christmas" that he introduced in the 1942 film "Holiday Inn" and for his 1977 duet of "Little Drummer Boy" and "Peace on Earth" with David Bowie that's become a perennial.

But a new PBS "American Masters" documentary, "Bing Crosby Rediscovered," which premieres Tuesday, illuminates just what a force he was in radio, film, television and music for generations of audiences. (A companion CD also has been released.)

Even 37 years after his death at age 74, Crosby remains one of the most popular performers in history. He has the most No. 1 records — 41 — with the Beatles a distant second.

In addition, Crosby was the top box office star from 1943 to '48, and his films sold more than 1 billion movie tickets. He won an Oscar for the 1944 best picture winner, *Going My Way*, and nominations for the 1945 sequel, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, and 1954's *The Country Girl*. His "Road" comedies with Bob Hope, including 1942's *Road to Morocco*, are as fresh and funny as they were seven decades ago.

"It's really hard for people to understand today. He was all of these things at the same time — the bestselling recording artist, the No. 1 movie box office guy and the biggest thing on radio, with 50 million listening to 'The Kraft Music Hall' every week," said Robert S. Bader, vice president of Crosby's estate, HLC Properties Ltd., and head of the Bing Crosby archives.

Despite all of his success, Crosby described himself simply as "an average guy who could carry a tune."

"What emerged for me doing this," said "Bing Crosby Rediscovered" director Robert Trachtenberg, "is that Crosby doesn't have the neurotic undercurrent of contemporaries like Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra, where each performance was kind of a really dramatic heart on your sleeve, I need the audience."

Crosby, he discovered, "was secure in who he was and so confident and at ease with himself. In some ways, that is what made him so universally popular. Like someone says in the movie, he was family."

Narrated by Stanley Tucci, the documentary features interviews with Crosby's widow, Kathryn, and their three children, Mary, Harry and Nathaniel, all of whom appeared on Crosby's TV specials, as well as singers Tony Bennett and Michael Feinstein, record producer Ken Barnes and biographer Gary Giddins.

The Crosby estate opened up the archives for the documentary, which features never-before-seen home movies, photos and even Dictabelt recordings.

Mary Crosby noted: "We had no control over what the product was going to be. I think it's an honest portrayal of who Dad was. They don't put him on a pedestal, but it very much shows who he was as a man as well as an artist."

She said she's pleased the film addresses claims that Crosby was an abusive father to his four late sons — Gary, Philip, Dennis and Lindsay — by his first wife, singer Dixie Lee, who battled alcoholism before her death of cancer in 1952. Since the publication of Gary Crosby's 1983 autobiography, "Going My Own Way," in which he described growing up in "a house of terror," Bing Crosby has been vilified in many circles.

"Dad was such an under-the-radar guy," said Crosby. "That's how we were raised. When Gary's book came out we thought if we don't deal with it this will go away. The tragedy is, of course, it is the one thing that stuck instead of his great, incredibly legacy of joy and artistry and music."

In the documentary, she recalls a lunch with Gary Crosby after the publication of his book at which he confessed to her that he had exaggerated some of his claims because he was told he would sell more copies.

Bing Crosby never denied he disciplined his sons, including spanking them, according to Trachtenberg. (The sons all suffered from problems related to alcohol and substance abuse.) "You have to realize this guy was born in 1903, and it was a completely different way of thinking and raising kids. And Bing admits at the time he was a failure as a father," Trachtenberg noted.

Though the Dictabelt recordings show how he tried to get help for his sons, Crosby was rarely home with them because of his career demands. "When his kids were growing up, he was doing it all and doing it all at once," said Bader.

But that wasn't the case with his second family, whom he raised in Hillsborough in the Bay Area. The children of that marriage remember their dad with great affection.

"He was of retirement age when I was growing up and probably had more time to spend with us," said Harry Crosby. "He was great with me. My father and I had a special relationship. He was very warm with us and nurturing."

Susan King

Then there was Neal Justin writing in the *Star Tribune* on November 26.

Bing Crosby profiled in a must-see holiday documentary

You could forgive Mary Crosby if she never wanted to hear "White Christmas" again. The most popular single in recording history was the signature hit for her father, Bing Crosby, and has become as tied to the holiday season as Santa Claus and fruitcake.

"For the first five years after his death, it was really painful to hear the song. I missed him so much, and I was in no way ready to lose my dad," said Crosby, who was only 18 when her father died of a heart attack in 1977 on a golf course near Madrid.

"That time has passed. I'm so proud and happy to hear it now. It makes me feel good inside."

Crosby's change of heart is a big reason why we're finally seeing "Bing Crosby Rediscovered," one of the finest — and most significant — installments of PBS' "American Masters" series.

The two-hour documentary, which premiered Tuesday on PBS, should introduce a new generation to arguably the most underrated artist of the 20th century, a man who was to pop music what Elvis Presley would later be to rock 'n' roll. Inspired by Louis Armstrong's phrasing, he brought jazz to the masses, becoming the most recorded singer of all time with nearly 400 hit singles. He was also a movie star, with a string of outrageous comedies with Bob Hope and three Oscar nominations, including a win as the affable priest in 1944's "Going My Way."

Twin Cities singer and jazz scholar **Arne Fogel** ranks Crosby with Armstrong and Charlie Chaplin among the most influential performers of the past 100 years.

"Jazz was very scary back then, especially in the Midwest. There was this racial aspect to it," said Fogel, who hosts a weekly tribute to Crosby-era music on KBEM Radio (88.5 FM). "Then along comes this guy with a smiling-neighbor, movie-star guise. He was able to change mainstream pop music."

But that side of Crosby may be unknown to anyone who wasn't a teenager by the 1950s. By the end of that decade he was more famous for selling Minute Maid frozen orange juice than dominating the radio with that soothing, smooth bass-baritone voice. He also rarely pushed himself as an actor, relying on dry wit and his laid-back persona rather than digging deep. The biggest exception: his turn as an alcoholic has-been actor in 1954's *The Country Girl*.

Part of his fade from superstardom was Crosby's reluctance to bask in the spotlight. He and his family lived away from Los Angeles, and Crosby rarely mingled with the cooler, hipper members of the Rat Pack.

"When you think of Sinatra, you think of a man in a tuxedo with a microphone," Fogel said. "When you think of Crosby, you think of a man with a hat and a fishing pole in his hand."

Another factor: allegations of abuse by the children from his first marriage. Six years after his death, son Gary Crosby wrote "Going My Own Way," a memoir that detailed incidents of being beaten with a belt dotted with metal studs. Two of his brothers confirmed the abuse, and later committed suicide. A fourth brother said the accounts were greatly exaggerated.

"Robert Trachtenberg (the director) really dealt with the elephant in the room, which was Gary's book," said his stepsister Mary. "I had lunch with (Gary) shortly after it came out, and he said agents told him he would sell more books if he made a bigger deal about it. My first thought was: How could you vilify your dad just to sell more books? My second thought was: Thank God my dad isn't around to see a child betraying him. He wouldn't have been able to deal with it."

The three children from Crosby's second marriage have never publicly said anything negative about their dad's parenting. In fact, they've barely said anything at all. That's another reason for Crosby's low profile these days.

Director Robert Trachtenberg with Mary Crosby

"Dad was really an under-the-radar kind of guy, and that's what we believed in," Mary Crosby said from her California home last week. (Characteristically, she downplays her own moment in the spotlight as Kristin Shepard, the character on "Dallas" who shot J.R. Ewing in one of TV's most-watched episodes.) **"It only took us 30 years to realize that we had done his legacy a terrible disservice. But we finally put it together."**

The film relies in large part on recordings, home movies and letters that were gathering dust in the basement of Bing Crosby's second wife, Kathryn. She and her three kids with Bing all contributed to the film. Among the highlights: a letter in which he admits he didn't think much of the script for the film *White Christmas*, a sequel to the far superior musical *Holiday Inn*.

Mary was impressed with the way Trachtenberg treated the family collection — as well as other aspects of her father that conflicted with his happy-go-lucky public persona. Viewers will meet a man who wasn't always comfortable with others and cherished his private time.

"This movie doesn't put Dad up on a pedestal," Mary said. "He wasn't perfect. But that's fine. For those of us who knew him and loved him, this is great. But I'm really hoping this will reach a new generation."

Neal Justin

I always feel that you can rely upon reviews in *Variety* and here's Brian Lowry's verdict in that periodical.

TV Review: American Masters' 'Bing Crosby Rediscovered'

Among music, radio, movies and (eventually, and grudgingly) TV, Bing Crosby crammed two or three careers into a single lifetime, which makes him prime fodder for "American Masters" treatment —

representing, as he's noted here, the "first multimedia star" of the 20th century. Still, the crooner's personal life poses a hurdle that "Bing Crosby Rediscovered," a generally first-rate documentary from writer-producer-director Robert Trachtenberg, struggles to clear. Ultimately, the mix feels about right, spending most of its time on why Crosby is worth remembering without ignoring his troubled children and allegations that he was an abusive father.

Drawing from access to Crosby's archives granted by his estate, Trachtenberg weaves in some remarkable audio — from the singer arguing with Decca Records founder Jack Kapp, to dictated messages about what to do regarding his children. It was a 1983 book by Crosby's son Gary, accusing his father of abusive behavior, which clouded his father's legacy, despite some of his other kids defending their dad — a situation that's addressed here, albeit sparingly.

Still, "Crosby Rediscovered" is most memorable for how it captures just what a massive star Crosby became, with his distinctive, intimate singing style; and what's described as his "mischievous and unpretentious" film persona, best exemplified in his "Road" movie series opposite Bob Hope.

William Paley's decision to sign Crosby "saved CBS Radio," it's noted, and it was Crosby who went on to champion taping shows in advance after World War II — transforming the medium from live to tape practically overnight.

The documentary also provides several interesting anecdotes — some related, via old interviews or recordings, by Crosby himself — about the reluctance to cast him as a priest in *Going My Way*; the surprise over what a huge hit "White Christmas" became; and his initial resistance to do television, where he ultimately found a very comfortable home. (Featured are amusing clips of his teeth-gnashing holiday specials featuring his family, and an awkward duet with David Bowie.)

Singers Tony Bennett and Michael Feinstein and biographer Gary Giddins are particularly good at conveying the source of Crosby's popularity, illustrated at one point by comparing his performance of "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" with those by Rudy Vallee and Al Jolson. The same goes for Crosby championing various artists either on the way up or down in their careers, from a young Rosemary Clooney to a rebounding Judy Garland.

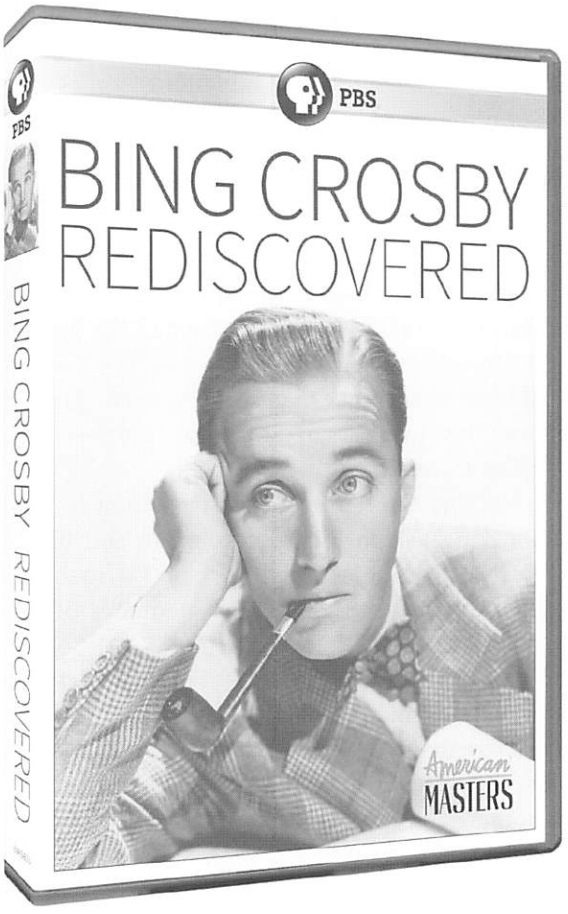
Narrated by Stanley Tucci, "Bing Crosby Rediscovered" should be a welcome jolt of nostalgia to those who remember Crosby, and a nifty introduction for the few younger folk who might deign to give it a look. And while Trachtenberg can't cover everything in a 90-minute format, in what might be considered a symbolic tribute to an old crooner, he at least manages to hit the high notes.

Brian Lowry

And then the program was issued on DVD which brought it more reviews and I liked this summing up from DVDTalk.com.

Final Thoughts:
Bing Crosby Rediscovered does what the truly great TV biographies do, even-handedly addressing the subject's flaws while vividly conveying what made him one of the 20th century's most beloved all-around entertainers. It does a handy job of being comprehensive with Crosby's incredible life while explaining the essence of the man's appeal across so many entertainment media. One of the best episodes of PBS's *American Masters*. **Highly Recommended**.

Matt Hinrichs



Lots of comments on social media including this one on Twitter which references the Miley Cyrus video.

> **Whitney Westerfield** @KyWhitney
> Such a great program on #BingCrosby tonight. Greatest recording artist of all time and never once had to swing naked on a wrecking ball!

Reaction from our members was very positive, to say the least! Greg Van Beek was the first to comment saying:

> I just finished watching the new PBS American Masters special on Bing. Wow. Outstanding in every way. No stone was left unturned; the family even confronts "the book" and Gary Crosby's accusations head on and in an

extraordinarily forthright manner (I hope when the show airs nationally that Mary's one word expletive description of Gary is left intact). Dictabelt recordings Bing made for his secretary to type into letter form reveal how much he gave and tried to do for his sons, along with his rather critical and unsatisfactory opinion of the film *White Christmas*. Phenomenal!

Ben Weaver

The documentary is excellent. A lot of clips I hadn't seen or heard before. I do wish however they had included the clip of the young Bing singing "Auf Wiedersehen, My Dear". An excellent example of his talent. Also I would have liked them to have shown how Bing could sing any kind of song, from Country & Western to Hawaiian, Ballads, Blues, Swing, Latin, French, Jazz, Light Opera, Hymns, etc. That might have taken too long. I know it was mentioned. Can't have everything, I suppose.

Ron McBride

The soundtrack is very good as well. I have purchased and listened to all 4 of the new cd's and highly recommend them to everyone. There are a few performances where the sound quality is questionable, but still very much worth the money. After all, it's Bing!

Our own Anton Garcia-Fernandez went further and leapt into print by publishing an article in *The Vintage Bandstand* reviewing the documentary.

Bing Crosby: An American Master Rediscovered in a New Documentary

American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered, the new documentary on Bing Crosby's life and career that aired last night on PBS (and which my wife and I watched on their northwest Tennessee affiliate, WLJT) has a clearly revisionist agenda. And that, in the case of Crosby, is not just fine but absolutely necessary, for two main reasons. First of all, because of the infamous books published in the 1980s that consistently slandered his name and negatively affected his invaluable legacy, one of which was written by one of his own sons, Gary Crosby. And then, and just as importantly, because Crosby's importance as a cultural icon and musical innovator is often downplayed, the public at large regarding him merely as a singer of seasonal songs come the month of December. And this is precisely why the title of this documentary, embraced by the Crosby estate (wife Kathryn Crosby and their sons, Harry and Nathaniel, and daughter, Mary, have participated actively in the project), is so appropriate. Crosby is, indeed, an indisputable American master, and his legacy needs to be rediscovered and presented to younger generations that may never be exposed to him otherwise.

All in all, the documentary succeeds in casting a different light on Crosby's legacy, and it is at once informative and entertaining, fast-paced and thoughtful in the way that it portrays Crosby's larger-than-life career and achievements. It benefits not only from the input of the Crosby family but also from interviews conducted with jazz critic and Crosby biographer Gary Giddins, singer and Crosby devotee Michael Feinstein, British producer Ken Barnes (who worked with Bing extensively in the 1970s), and also Tony Bennett, who throws in some interesting comments and memories of how much of an early influence Crosby was on his own singing style. Moreover, there are audio and video clips of old interviews with son Gary, early musical partner Al Rinker, bandleading brother Bob Crosby, and friend and duet partner Rosemary Clooney, among others. And then, of course, there is also a multitude of snippets showing the man himself in action, taken from movies, radio and television appearances, and interviews, as well as dozens of pictures, some interesting home movies, and Dictabelt tape reels that contain recordings of Crosby dictating personal letters. All of this contributes to painting a well-rounded picture of Crosby as a man and as an artist, two facets of his personality that have been long intertwined and difficult to untangle.

And this is precisely one of the positive aspects of the documentary: its insistence on underscoring the fact that there was a difference between Crosby's public persona—that is, the way that the public perceived him through his work—and his private self, and its claim that Bing should not be chastised for it. Indeed, that is the way it is with most artists and most people in general, but in the case of Crosby, his difficult relationship with his sons from his marriage to his first wife, Dixie Lee, as well as the gossip-column attitude of many who chronicled said marriage, has resulted in an unfair, slandering treatment of the man.

with his four boys in 1959.

Bing Crosby Rediscovered is determined to set the record straight, offering a portrait of Crosby as a complex yet loving and caring family man who made pretty much the same choices, both right and wrong, when it came to raising his kids as most of the parents of his generation. Throughout the interviews shown in the

documentary, his sons, daughter, and second wife, Kathryn, provide new approaches to Crosby the family man, trying to understand the kind of values he upheld and thereby completing and attenuating the grossly one-sided picture that one gets from books such as Gary's 'Going My Own Way' and Donald Shepherd and Robert Slatzer's 'Bing Crosby: The Hollow Man'.

Even more importantly, the documentary concentrates on the many avenues of showbusiness and American culture on which Crosby made an indelible mark (records, films, radio, television) and emphasizes his perhaps lesser-known roles in funding the research into audio and videotape, as a philanthropist, as a morale-booster during World War II, and as a Civil Rights supporter. One aspect of Crosby's contribution to popular music that is illustrated very effectively is the new approach to phrasing that he introduced, aided by the invention of the microphone, when his career began in the late 1920s and early '30s. This is shown by comparing three different versions of the Depression-era classic "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," sung by Rudy Vallee, Al Jolson, and Crosby. The comparison of snippets of the three records clearly demonstrates Bing's new, coolly relaxed approach to phrasing, proving that, as Michael Feinstein rightly argues, he was several decades ahead of his time even this early in his career. While there is basically very little in the documentary that a well-informed Crosby fan does not already know, the project is notable for its entertainment value and for the wealth of information on Crosby that it offers to a potential new generation of admirers. There is simply a great deal still to discover about the story of Bing Crosby, and this documentary is a fine place to start for anyone interested in his work or in popular music and jazz of the highest order.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez

(Editor: Member Michael McCrann also had an article about the program published on the Frontiers Media web site but sadly we just don't have enough space to reproduce it. However go to www.frontiersmedia.com/ and search for Bing Crosby and hopefully it will still be there. Michael put in a great plug for BING magazine too so many thanks for that, Michael. In his email Michael said:

> I just sent Mr. Wiggins my renewal check as I received my winter Bing issue. Great as usual. Plus when I went to Amoeba Records last week to buy the PBS dvd the kid in charge who I asked told me he had watched the show and thought it was fantastic. He did not know Bing at all but was totally impressed by the show. Hope this adds a lot more members for your magazine and helps young people get acquainted with his great talent.

"White Christmas" back in the charts

For a few weeks each year, *Billboard* magazine adds to its stable of charts, the 'Holiday 100 songs' ranking and 'Top Holiday Albums'. Like the Billboard Hot 100, the Holiday 100 encompasses sales, airplay and streaming activity for its formula; Top Holiday Albums ranks the top-selling seasonal albums by pure sales.

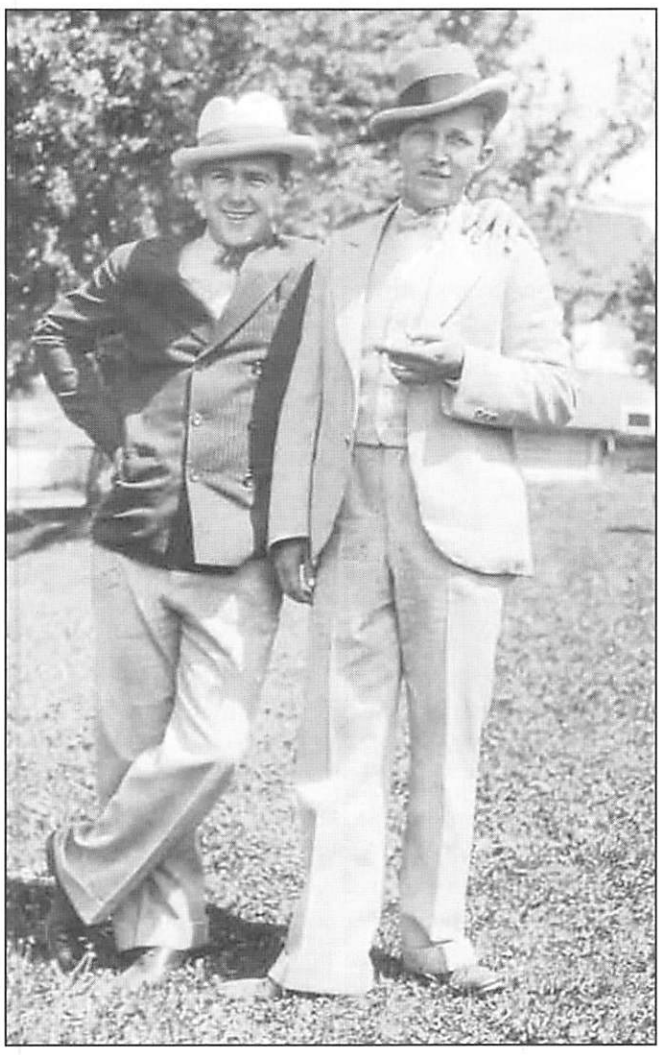
It was a thrill to see "White Christmas" from the *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* soundtrack standing at #9 on the first Billboard Holiday 100 chart in December! Mr. Crosby's "White Christmas" album was shown at #39 in Top Holiday Albums chart.

Bing also appeared at #70 in the Artist 100 chart on December 18 with "It's Beginning to Look Like Christmas". This chart looks at the week's most popular artists across all genres, ranked by album and track sales as measured by Nielsen BDS, radio airplay audience impressions as measured by Nielsen BDS, streaming activity data from online music sources tracked by Nielsen BDS and fan interaction on social networking sites as compiled by Next Big Sound

That PBS show has certainly made an impact! Well done all concerned.

Meanwhile, in Spokane, things were happening.

Bing Crosby House



SPOKANE, Washington – Gonzaga University and the Advocates for Bing Crosby invited the public to celebrate the holiday season with a free "White Christmas" open house at Bing's boyhood home (508 E. Sharp Ave.) from noon to 4 p.m., on Saturday, Dec. 6. Hot cider and cookies were available along with some new photos of Bing as a youngster. The Crosby family had donated the new images to Gonzaga in time for the event, which included exhibits of Bing Crosby memorabilia from Gonzaga's collection. Gonzaga's Crosby House was freshly adorned in festive Christmas decorations and Bing's best Christmas recordings were played. The Craftsman-style house where Gonzaga's most famous alumnus grew up is the public museum for the world's largest public collection of Bing Crosby memorabilia. The new photos will remain on display through 2015 and we have pleasure in reproducing one of these above.

This event was soon followed by another in Spokane...

The 9th Annual Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival

Organized by the Advocates for the Bing Crosby Theater, this took place at the Bing Crosby Theater on Saturday, December 13. The program was:
White Christmas 11:30 a.m.
Anything Goes (1954) 2 p.m.
Holiday Inn (1942) 4:30 p.m.
7 p.m. Live Performance:
Songs and stories by Bing's nephew, Howard Crosby
7:30 p.m. White Christmas (1954)
All Day:
Photo and Other Exhibits, Raffles and Souvenir Sales

Members will recall that The Advocates is a volunteer, non-profit organization established to recognize the value of a historic theater which is also an historic place because of its connection with Bing's career. If you would like to donate or volunteer, e-mail Bill Stimson at wstimson2@aol.com

Gonzaga's Crosby Collection

In our last issue we described how Gonzaga's Crosby Collection had been moved and displayed in the Crosby House. Subsequently we have heard from Thomas Short, a student at Gonzaga University majoring in History. One area of his studies has led him to Bing and this semester he was given an internship working with the Crosby Collection and this has ranged from creating new exhibits for the museum as well as building up a social media presence on Facebook, a page called Bing Crosby House. As part of his internship, he was required to write a short, descriptive paper about Bing based on his experience and he has kindly allowed us to publish this.

My Time with Bing, by Thomas Short

The one thing I have learned about Bing Crosby is that his success was unparalleled. There are musicians who have garnered more awards, and actors who have starred in more films, but the diversity of Bing's career has never been matched. A summary of Bing's life would describe him as a radio, TV, film and music star, but simply calling him a star doesn't represent the scope of his impact on popular culture. Even beyond his role as an entertainer, Bing gave back to the community and pushed technology forward with his funding and ideas. The time I've spent with the Bing Crosby Collection at Gonzaga University has not only given me great experience, but it has brought me closer to the greatest entertainer of all time.

Perhaps the most important part of Bing's life is his origin story. Born in Tacoma on May 3, 1903, Harry Lillis Crosby was the fifth of seven children. By the time Bing's family moved to Spokane in 1906, and eventually the Crosby House in 1913, it was evident that Bing was a special child. Bing's father, Harry, had a large influence on Bing's musical background. Harry spent an entire paycheck to get the Crosby family a new phonograph, and music filled the Crosby House every day after that. Harry sang and played mandolin, and Bing's mother, Kate, also sang. Naturally, Bing also began to sing, but in a much different way than we know from his recordings. As Bing matured, the way he sang also changed and it eventually became the crooning we recognize today.

Aside from the origin of his musical background, an important part of young Bing's life was Gonzaga. As a child, Bing cared about music, theater, sports and his religion, and Gonzaga High School catered to all of these interests. Bing became involved in the Dramatic Club at Gonzaga, and within his first few years was one of the stars of each production the club put on. Along with theater, Bing focused on his oration classes. Bing excelled at oration, and people listening to him speak could attest to his natural charisma. Bing even spoke at his high school graduation likely because of his oratory skills. These skills he learned at Gonzaga were important to him, and he often credited Gonzaga for giving him these skills which helped make him famous.

Gonzaga also played host to multiple sports teams including football, baseball and swimming, all of which Bing participated in. Although he was too small to play these competitively at the college level, Bing loved the sports and played throughout high school. Bing's religious life was also invigorated during this time as his home was only a few blocks away from St. Aloysius Church. Every Sunday, Bing attended the early morning mass and was an alter server. As busy as he was with

theater, sports and church, somehow Bing found room for music as well. He picked up the drums, and from there his life as a musician blossomed. While attending Gonzaga University to study law, Bing played drums with the local Musicaladers, the lead man of which was Al Rinker. A few years into his university life, Bing and Al decided they should take their talents to Los Angeles and try to become successful musicians there. They left Spokane, drove for a couple weeks down to Los Angeles and sang the entire way.

One of the photos placed on the Bing Crosby House Facebook page. This shows a photo of Bing (front and center) along with other children who unfortunately are not recognizable. But could the little girl on the left be Bing's sister, Mary Rose?

Bing and Al eventually hit it big as they joined Paul Whiteman's group, an event Bing always credited to Al's sister, the great Mildred Bailey. The duo was first put on the vaudeville circuit, but then they became a regular part of Whiteman's show. It was quickly becoming clear that Bing had star potential, and soon enough records featuring Bing were made under Whiteman. Bing's talents eventually expanded outside of Whiteman's band, and Bing began a solo recording career. His radio career began in 1931 and quickly exploded. Bing was destined to become one of the radio greats, and his method of pre-recording programs revolutionized the way radio was approached.

It goes without saying that Bing had an incredibly successful musical career. Bing had 38 different songs reach number one (with some reaching the position multiple times), and his single "White Christmas" still holds the record for most singles sold at over 500 million worldwide. He collected 23 gold and platinum records, and many of the songs he performed for movies went on to win the Oscar for best song, including "White Christmas" and "Swinging on a Star." Bing used his musical talents to help others as well. His performance during WWII created a huge impact with millions of dollars in war bonds being credited to Bing's singing. Bing was also named the single most important person for the war effort in America. Also, his recording of "Silent Night" had all proceeds go to charity because Bing thought it was wrong to profit from a religious song. Along with his commercial success, Bing also revolutionized the way singers performed live. With the introduction of the microphone, Bing was able to shape his voice into the crooning sound we recognize today instead of having to yell through a megaphone. The result was a smooth voice that many attest sounds like a personal performance given by Bing to the individual listener.

Another of Bing's successes was his film career. He was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor on three occasions, as well as in back to back years (1944-45). He won in 1944 for his role as Father O'Malley in *Going My Way* and was nominated in *The Bells of St. Mary's* and *The Country Girl*. Over his career, Bing appeared in over 100 films, with some of them being classics such *as White Christmas*. Also, beginning in 1940, Bing teamed up with friend Bob Hope to record the popular "Road to..." movies. Along with film, Bing also had multiple popular TV specials, one of which – The Edsel Show – went on to provide Gonzaga University with the money necessary to build a new library.

But perhaps the greatest legacy of Bing is his philanthropy, especially at Gonzaga University. Bing always remembered his roots, and on multiple occasions he gave back to the school he credited with giving him his performing skills. During Gonzaga's 1937 homecoming, Bing donated $10,000 to the school, and in 1956 funded the construction of a new library, the Crosby Library (now the Crosby Student Center). To recognize Bing for his continual support, Gonzaga awarded Bing an honorary degree in 1937 and the Desmet Medal, the school's highest honor, in 1968. Bing's legacy is present at Gonzaga, and the Crosby Student Center serves as a hub for student life.

Although I never met Bing, and although I was born two decades after he died, I have a strong respect for who he was. Bing achieved unparalleled fame, but stayed humble, had strong family values and remembered where he came from. In almost any aspect of entertainment, you can trace a significant event back to Bing. But one of the greatest parts about Bing is that he wasn't in it for the money or the fame, but rather he was an entertainer because he loved it. In the last few months I feel like I got to know Bing, and although nobody may achieve the level of fame Bing did, everybody should learn from the way he lived.

Thomas Short

(Editor: What a nice tribute! Those of you on Facebook, please take the time to look at the page for the Bing Crosby House and "like" it.)

1201 .... Anyone?

As we know, Greg Van Beek has a fascinating hobby and he has an interesting offer for members.

In the summer 2013 issue, I wrote about my love of antique Philco radios and my hobby of restoring them. Since that time, I've found myself working on several of the famous model 1201's. Known to collectors as the "Bing Crosby Special" because of Philco advertising featuring Crosby with the set, this five tube model featured a unique method of playing records. You open the front lid (it flips down), insert a 10 or 12 inch 78 rpm record, close the lid and the record begins to play. This was a very popular model in its time. So much so, in fact, that it remained in production through the 1948 season. A staggering number, some 238,723 were produced in 1946-47, with another 30,463 in 1948 (appearance wise, the 1946-48 model 1201's were identical). In the past year, I've restored four model 1201's.

Recently I was amazed to learn that a model 1201 is featured prominently in a lengthy scene in the 1948 feature film *Good Sam* starring Gary Cooper and Ann Sheridan. The film has just been released on DVD and Blu-ray by Olive Films:

http://www.olivefilms.com/films/good-sam/

So why, out of all the radios manufactured in 1947 or 1948, would a model 1201 be used as a prop or set decoration? It's not playing in the scene, nor is it being demonstrated. It's just sitting in the foreground, in a place where you can't help but notice it.

I have a few theories on this. They all center around one person: Bing Crosby.

Bing, being the star of *Philco Radio Time* each Wednesday evening over ABC radio, was promoting the 1201 heavily during the commercial spots on the show. More than any other model, the 1201 was given the pitch. Perhaps Philco put a bug in Bing's ear that they'd like to see one of their products in a movie. And Bing, perhaps not finding a place for a set in one of his own films, called on Gary Cooper to see what he could do. Cooper, the star of *Good Sam* was one of Bing's best buddies (Crosby named his oldest son after him).

The film was made for Paramount Pictures, which had Bing under contract at that time since 1932. So Bing had a bit of 'pull' there as well.

Finally, the film was directed by Leo McCarey, who directed Bing in his Oscar winning film *Going My Way* four years prior, and his Oscar nominated film *The Bells of St. Mary's*, released in 1945. They too had a close working relationship, and no doubt Bing was able to lean on McCarey for a favor.

Another theory is that the guests on *Philco Radio Time,* at least in 1946-47, were given a model 1201 as part of their compensation for appearing on the show. Gary Cooper guested on the 1947-48 season opener of PRT on October 1, 1947, so perhaps he was already filming *Good Sam* at that time and took his 1201 with him to the set. As a side-note, comedian Jerry Colonna's son Bob is a friend of mine, and he remembers the family having a 1201 when he was growing up. As Bob said, "They were too cool! Sort of magical — slide a record in, close the door — and the thing plays! You never see the needle!" Jerry Colonna guested on *Philco Radio Time* in December of 1946, and Bob believes too that the reason they had a 1201 was because of Bing and his having Jerry on the show.

The 1201 before restoration.

Accompanying this article are two photos of a 1948 model 48-1201 I recently restored, showing before restoration and after. One drawback to these sets concerns the cabinet, which uses a faux woodgrain decal over a plain white wood cabinet to simulate a rich wood finish. Known as "Philcote", this decal, once chipped, scratched, or missing, is virtually impossible to replicate. The sides and dial inset were toned to a very dark, almost a black-colored stain, and as a result, they are easily refinished.

This example, as you can see, had a broken and missing glass dial scale. Thankfully exact reproductions are available at $29. The gold PHILCO decals are also available in exact reproductions ($8.00 a set). Suitable reproduction grille cloth is also available for around $15, or, if the original is not ripped or torn, it can be lightly touched up with a gold spray, bringing new life into an otherwise dull, faded fabric. Repainting the gold around the base of the knobs (which is almost always missing due to wear) rounds out the cabinet restoration.

Chassis restoration begins with a thorough cleaning and lubrication of the moving parts, such as the dial pointer, and dial string wheels, tuning capacitor, etc. The dial light is replaced. Tubes are then tested, and any that test bad or questionable are replaced. New old stock tubes, depending on their rarity and demand, can run anywhere from $5.00 to $20.00 each. A new line cord is installed, costing $4.00. Finally, all capacitors are replaced with modern equivalents, and resistors checked and replaced as needed. An entire radio chassis can have new capacitors and resistors installed for under $25.

The volume control is also cleaned and lubricated. Once all the components are checked and replaced, it's time to reconnect the antenna and give it a try. If sweet music comes from the speaker, success! Then it's a matter of aligning the radio for optimum performance....and ensuring that the stations line up with their corresponding positions on the dial scale.

Now it's time to tackle the phonograph. There are several things that are automatically needed for the phonograph. Namely a new idler / drive wheel and new cartridge (needle). A modern ceramic mono cartridge with 3 mil sapphire needle runs $15. They work great and are similar to a cartridge used on stereo equipment. They will not damage your valuable 78's. The idler wheel costs $23 new.

The phonograph motor is lubricated and re-shimmed to compensate for shrinking rubber mounts due to age. If needed, the turntable is reflocked, giving it that factory new 'brown fuzz' appearance to protect the records sliding over it.

The 1201 after restoration.

Finally, after the phonograph is tested, everything that has been disconnected to remove is soldered back together and remounted in the cabinet. And another 1201 is set to be played and enjoyed.

So you might be asking yourself why am I outlining all of this? Well, after restoring four of these units already (at present I have two restored examples here, one is sold, and the other may be sold before this issue goes to press), I'm willing to offer my Philco 1201 restoration services to my fellow ICC members.

Have you been looking for a model 1201 to play your 78's just as they were originally played back in Bing's heyday ("A Gal In Calico", "Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love", "My Heart Goes Crazy", "You Keep Coming Back Like A Song" all somehow sound better...and more proper...when played on a Philco 1201)? Want one just because of its strong connection to Bing and Philco Radio Time? Perhaps you had one when they were new and would like to relive that part of your youth again?

If you add up all of the new parts that need replacing outlined in this article, I have well over $100 in a restoration. Unfortunately, due to weight and the fragile nature of these radios (compounded by rough treatment in shipping), I can only offer this service to members within the continental United States. It costs $35 to ship one of these sets securely, double boxed within the US. So if you have a 1201 in your possession already that needs restoration, I can do that for around $150 post-paid. Again, depending on what parts need replacing and what doesn't.

If you want me to try to locate an example and restore it, it would run closer to $250 post-paid, as I have to pay for the radio and the shipping to get it to me before restoration can start. They do turn up on eBay and Craigslist occasionally, but rarely are they in working / restored condition. Keep in mind that there isn't an endless supply of these sets, despite the high number of them being produced. It may be weeks, or possibly even months before a suitable candidate for restoration can be located and acquired by me.

Bottom line is CONTACT ME FIRST* before sending any money or "ordering" a set!

If more than one person is looking for a 1201, they'll have to be done on a first come, first served basis. So in that respect, turn around on a restoration can and probably will be at minimum one month. Possibly two months, depending on supply and demand, and my workload.

Bear in mind, radio restoration is just a hobby of mine, so any work I do in that respect is done after my other full time (and then some) work commitments, hence the longer lead time in obtaining a restored 1201.

Greg Van Beek

*My contact information is on the inside front cover of this issue.

A TRIBUTE TO BING CROSBY

In our last issue, Roger Schore gave us advance notice of a show being put on in New York on December 2. He now sends us his report on what sounds to have been a very enjoyable evening.

Last December 2nd, running almost simultaneously in the New York area with the PBS broadcast "Bing Crosby, Rediscovered," the producing group Urban Stages debuted their 2014 season entitled "Winter Rhythms" with A TRIBUTE TO BING CROSBY. Hosted by composer, pianist and singer Bill Zeffiro, the show consisted of a number of New York's leading cabaret performers. To top it all, Gary Giddins was the special guest.

Here's a list of the songs and performers:

Part One: The Thing About Bing: An overview of his career
"Snow" - Jeff Harnar, Miles Phillips, Anna Marie Sell and Marissa Miller
Talk and Video Clip - Gary Giddins
"Fancy Meeting You Here" - Bill Zeffiro & Mary Foster Conklin

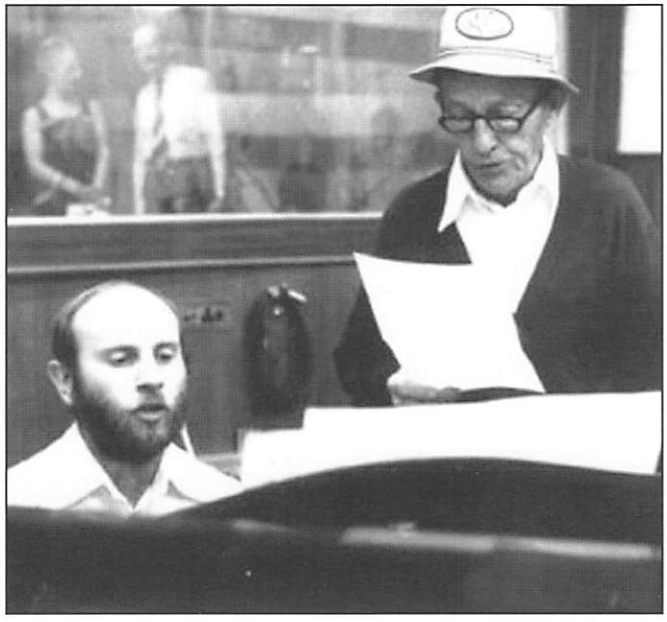
Part Two: The 1930s
"How Deep Is the Ocean" - Mary Foster Conklin
"Pennies from Heaven" - Miles Phillips
"East Side of Heaven" - Jeff Harnar

Part Three: The 1940s
"Road to Morocco" - Bill and Marissa Mulder
"Moonlight Becomes You" - Marissa Miller
"But Beautiful" - Anna Marie Sell
"Mele Kalikimaka" - Bill with Marissa Mulder and Marissa Miller
"You Keep Coming Back Like a Song" - Susan Winter
"Sunday, Monday or Always" - Marissa Mulder
"Swinging on a Star" - Steve Ross
"Going My Way" - Steve Ross

Part Four: The 1950s
"Count Your Blessings" - Bill & Julie Reyburn
"In The Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening" - Susan Winter
"Just the Way You Are" - Bill & Anna Marie Sell
"True Love" - Julie Reyburn and Miles Phillips
"Well, Did You Evah" - Bill and Jeffer Harnar

Part Five: Crosby and Christmas
"Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth" - Bill and Steve Ross
"White Christmas" - Jeff Harnar and All

Gary Giddins decided to show a "Hollywood Palace" clip, deliberately eliminating the Crosby-Armstrong appearances because it would have "everybody sobbing." Instead, he chose the night Bing welcomed Johnny Mercer. I'm sure most of Bing and Johnny's fans are familiar with the segment, where Crosby sings a song and Johnny comes back with one of his own songs on a similar topic. In his introduction, Giddins mentioned that Mercer always credited Bing for his Hollywood career, opening the door for him by placing "I'm An Old Cowhand" in *Rhythm on the Range*. Before running the segment, Giddins pointed out that Johnny, in order to calm his nerves before going on camera, got himself a little "juiced."



Bing rehearses for the "Feels Good" album with pianist Keith Nichols.

After the broadcast, Giddins told the audience that in the seventies, when Bing was recording the "Feels Good, Feels Right" album, the session players decided to have some fun at Bing's expense, trying to throw Bing off his time and getting him unhinged. They were unsuccessful and afterwards, when the musical director Alan Cohen confessed the prank to Bing, Crosby replied, "All I hear is the one. If I hear the one, I don't care what s**t you pile on." Addressing the controversy over Crosby's raising of his first family, Gary said, "Not enjoying Crosby because he was a strict father is like not enjoying Tolstoy and Robert Frost because everyone around them was committing suicide."

The show was one of the most enjoyable that I've attended in a long time. All of the singers were in very good form and were warmly received. Bill Zeffiro did an exceptional job of hosting and keeping the proceedings moving swiftly and smoothly. In particular, I enjoyed the way that Mary Foster Conklin captured Rosemary Clooney's breeziness in her duet with Bill on "Fancy Meeting You Here." Before she sang "How Deep Is the Ocean," Mary said that the recording of that song was on the same day that Bing was first introduced

to Bob Hope. Miles Phillips sang "Pennies from Heaven" as a ballad rather than a finger snapping rhythm number and to hear Jeff Harnar sing the rarely heard "East Side of Heaven" in a warm, conversational manner was a treat. Marissa Mulder delivered a particularly sweet and winning "Sunday, Monday or Always," and Steve Ross brought his urbane charm to "Going My Way." Departing from the ballad approach after the first chorus, Steve gave the second chorus an ever-so-slightly jazzy spin that I thought was very effective. When the program was over, I ran home to catch the end of the PBS documentary. It was wonderful to feel Bing's presence so strongly on this early December night and Urban Stages, particularly its artistic director Frances Hill, program director Rachel Sullivan, producer and director Peter Napolitano, along with Bill Zeffiro and all the performers deserved thanks for honoring Bing.

Roger Schore

(Editor: Short clips from the show can now be found on YouTube. Search for "Urban Stages Crosby".

Music Times of December 22 carried an interesting headline about Spotify, which as many of you will know is virtually an on-line juke box.)

Spotify Features More Than 900,000 Christmas Songs...22,000 of which are by Bing Crosby.

Christmas music is a huge industry. That's why there's at least one radio station that switches to a Christmas-only format for up to two months of the year and why SiriusXM now has seven different holiday channels this year (one of which is admittedly a Hanukkah station). Michael Bublé has gathered a nice paycheck every December as his holiday albums return to the Billboard Top 10. The folks over at *Music Machinery* looked into how the trend affects Spotify and found some interesting (aka ridiculous) numbers. The foremost of which is that the streaming service features more than 900,000 Christmas songs from nearly 64,000 different performers. How did the number get so high? Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley go a long way. Based on *Music Machinery's* findings, that trio accounts for more than 53,500 songs on their own. Wait, what? No, Bing "The King of Christmas" didn't record 22.382 individual holiday tracks as the list might seem to suggest...rather, his classic tracks appear on so many compilations that his "individual" songs number into the thousands. For example, his biggest hit "White Christmas" appears on nearly 2,200 separate albums. Eartha Kitt's "Santa Baby" and Presley's "Blue Christmas" have also gotten around, appearing on nearly 1,300 albums each.

The ultimate moral to take from all of this is that we as listeners could probably branch out and let some younger turks get some credit. The site lists the Top 20 performers with the most Christmas recordings on Spotify and none of them are more recent than The Beatles (*Music Machinery*'s example). The same applies to the Top 25 recording list.

Ryan Book

1950 BINGSDAY – In Front Royal, Virginia

It's interesting how an item advertised for sale on eBay in January can remind us of half-forgotten events. The item in question was a 10" by 7" photo album on sale for $1250 which contained many photos of Bing's memorable day in Front Royal, Virginia on April 1st, 1950. How did it come about?

Well, on April 30, 1948, Bing acted as the grand marshal of the Grand Feature Parade of the 21st. Annual Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival in Winchester, Virginia. The crowd watching the event was estimated at 100,000. He then travelled on to nearby Front Royal, Virginia, where he sang on the courthouse steps as part of a concert to help raise money for a new stadium. Bing was the first contributor to the Front Royal Recreation Center Building Fund when he donated $1,000. Clearly Bing thought that the venture was worthwhile and in 1950 he arranged for the world premiere of his film *Riding High* to be shown in Front Royal as part of the fund-raising activities.

There used to be a motion picture trade journal called *Harrison's Reports* written mostly by Pete Harrison and his report on that April day in 1950 is well-worth reading.

"BINGSDAY" — A GREAT JOB OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Saturday, April 1, will never be forgotten by Front Royal, a peaceful little Virginia town of some nine thousand inhabitants, where Bing Crosby's newest Paramount picture, *Riding High*, had its world premiere at the Park Theatre, a benefit showing climaxing a day of festivities that marked the dedication of a new Front Royal athletic field on which is to be built the "Bing Crosby Stadium."

The dedication and premiere were planned by the State of Virginia and the people of Front Royal in connection with their official designation of April 1 as "Bingsday," in honor of Crosby not only for his work on the screen and the radio but also for his various humanitarian activities.

From 5 a.m. Saturday morning until well after midnight a holiday atmosphere pervaded the town as more than twenty-five thousand people, drawn from the surrounding rural areas, poured into the community to pay homage to Crosby, whose appearance in person was

the cause of the excitement.

The celebration started with a massive parade that was made up of some one hundred and fifty separate units, featuring high school bands, floats of fraternal, veterans and commercial organizations, the fire departments of many towns, and hundreds of school children, each carrying home-made signs hailing and welcoming Crosby.

The center of attraction, of course, was Bing himself, who brought up the rear of the parade perched on top of a fire department jeep.

The terminal point of the parade was the athletic field, where the townspeople, whose hearts Bing had captured with his easy-going, casual manner, gave him a standing ovation so filled with sincerity that it brought a lump to one's throat. Then they outdid themselves presenting him with a gigantic key to the city and numerous gifts.

After receiving tributes from local and visiting dignitaries, Bing rushed to the Park Theatre where, prior to a special free showing of the picture for children only, he held the stage alone for a full hour entertaining them with gags and songs. It was here that Bing showed that he has a heart as big as they come, for, when he learned that approximately one hundred children had been unable to squeeze into the theatre, he insisted that the only other theatre in town be opened to accommodate them, and then repeated his entire show for them, omitting nothing.

The next stop for Bing was the Warren County High School, where he awarded prizes in a cake-baking contest, thrilling the seventy-five women participants no end as he sampled each cake and complimented them on their culinary skill.

The premiere in the evening was a gala affair. Brilliant searchlights illuminated the sky in the best Hollywood tradition, and adding to the excitement was the arrival at the theatre of such notables as Vice President Barkley and his charming wife, the Governors of Virginia and West Virginia, Senators Harry F. Byrd and A. Willis Robertson, Secretary of the Army Gray, and a host of other important people, who were greeted with sustained ovations by the huge crowds.

Bing sings at the premiere

In the theatre, Bing, for the third time that day, put on his one-man show of songs and quips, which loudspeakers carried to the throngs outside. Here again Bing showed the stuff he is made of, for at the end of his stint, when it was announced that $11,400 had been realized for the youth fund from the premiere and the day's different events, he modestly added his own contribution of $3,600 to make it an even $15,000.

He then rushed to a 'teenagers' dance at the local high school, where he put on a show for the youngsters and danced with several of the girls.

For his final appearance of the night, he went to a square dance sponsored by the Textile Workers Union, and here again he put on a complete show.

As anyone can judge from a reading of this account, Bing Crosby's schedule for the day was a back-breaking one, but he entered into the spirit of the day with genuine enthusiasm and sincerity, obviously enjoying every minute of it. He outdid himself in every respect. When the crowd shouted, "Sing, Bing!" he grinned back and said: "I'll sing until you're unconscious." And the crowd loved him for it. Even the more than fifty hardened representatives of the press and radio, who covered the proceedings, were impressed deeply by the way he gave of himself.

"Bingsday" received nation-wide publicity through the press and radio, and from the angle of showmanship it is a great send-off for *Riding High.* But even more important is the fact that what took place at Front Royal stands out as one of the finest examples of good public relations for the motion picture industry. When a company like Paramount sets the world premiere of one of its most important pictures in a small community many people never heard of, and when a star of the caliber of Bing Crosby goes to such a community to participate in the festivities and to help raise funds for the benefit of the local youngsters, it is a public relations job of the first order, one that should do much to take away the bad taste left by the behavior of such personalities as Ingrid Bergman and Rita Hayworth, and by the ravings and rantings of Senator Edwin C. Johnston.

Max E. Youngstein, Paramount's publicity chief, Jerry Pickman, his aide, and all the others on his alert publicity staff, deserve great credit for their expert handling of this event.

Above all, however, everyone in the motion picture industry may well be proud of Bing Crosby.

Pete Harrison

During the day, Bing was also made an Honorary Colonel by Randolph-Macon Academy and presented with a scabbard and sword by the cadets.

At the Randolph-Macon Academy

The local press commented on the actual premiere as follows:

> Combining old favorites with new and interspersing them with his inimitable humor and friendly patter, Mr. Crosby presented a program which will be long remembered. . . . He captivated his audience with his genuine friendliness and informality and brought down the house with his allusion to Front Royal when he sang, "I feel like I'm on my own home soil, when I'm down in old Front Roy'l" in his own version of "Dear Hearts and Gentle People."
> (*Warren Sentinel*, April 6, 1950)

(Editor: Incidentally, the album did not sell for the advertised $1250 and instead a "best offer" was accepted. Hope one of our members bought it!)

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

> Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

Joan M. Jay, Ruislip, London, UK (Tel: 0208 8664148)

> Mrs. Jay (the widow of our former member Philip Jay) has to dispose of her late husband's collection. She says that there are at least 200 LPs plus 13 box sets (which have hardly been played). Anyone interested, please give her a call.

Seamus Kelly, 30 Turrall St., Worcester, Worcestershire WR3 8AJ, UK (Phone: 01905 27529)

> Seamus has for sale the *Bing's Hollywood* set (Australian releases). In mint condition. Played only once. Offers direct to Seamus please.

Matthew Long, 62 Stroud Road, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 2JT, UK. (E-mail: appleberrywine@live.co.uk)

> ICC member Matthew is a jazz and easy listening vocalist and he recorded his first album last year featuring celebrated songs from Perry Como, Frank Sinatra, Matt Monro and many more. The album includes songs such as "Catch a Falling Star, "I've Got You Under My Skin" and "A Portrait of My Love", plus Matthew's

very own single "Dancing With You" composed by Lamar Pecorino. The album has been licensed by MCPS for composer royalties, is professionally manufactured and available now on CD for just £5, plus £1.50 postage (60p per additional copy). Contact Matthew direct.

Oxford University Press reminds us that:

Late Life Jazz: The Life and Career of Rosemary Clooney by Ken Crossland and Malcolm Macfarlane continues to be available from Amazon, or direct from Oxford University Press at:
http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199798575.do
Prices: $23.96 (Amazon USA), $26.84 (Amazon USA – Kindle), Can$29.95, £18.99 (UK), £17.09 (UK - Kindle). The book has recently been awarded a Certificate of Merit for Best Historical Research in Recorded Popular Music by the prestigious Association for Recorded Sound Collections.

Barbara Pearce, Maidstone, Kent, UK (Tel: 01622 687724)

Barbara would like to pass on her late Dad's (Percy Keepin) collection and all she seeks is that it goes to a good home. Her telephone number is 01622 687724 and anyone interested should get in contact with her via this number as she is not on the net. There are CDs, 78s, LPs and books but no list as yet.

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 email: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing and other easy listening artists' CDs, please contact Ray.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: abcsoc@dodo.com)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights.

The film night on December 9 featured *High Society* and the compilation *A Bing Crosby Christmas*. On February 24, *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* was shown with a 1966 Danny Kaye show in support. Further film nights are planned for April 28, June 23, August 25, October 27 and December 8. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains a mass of information plus some excellent audio and video vaults which contain much rare material.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and the number of people who have "liked" the site has now risen to over 281,000. I hope they have all bought the recent DVD and CD releases!

Bing Crosby House

Fairly new to Facebook. Go to:
www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby-House/296302530555116
Rare items from Gonzaga's collection are frequently displayed and it's well worth a look.

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which has lots of useful tweets. It has grown to 6111 followers now.
@Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 3102 followers as we go to press.

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous radio book, Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" can all be accessed. Your editor's book "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" is on the site too. All of these books are being updated as new information arises.

See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Created by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

Tony Meade's blog

Tony has an interesting and varied site at http://bingsphotos.blogspot.co.uk/

John Marshall's Compilations

John's excellent PowerPoint presentations "A Night At The Movies" and "The Written Word" can now be found by typing *internet archive john c marshall bing-the written word* into your search engine. Also he has now added his very interesting Footloose Follies series to the Internet and this can be found by searching against *John C. Marshall Footloose Follies.* This series has many clips of Bing and many other greats from the 30s, 40s and 50s.

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/)

A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandy Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (email: Flufftwo@dejazzd.com - website: www.jolson.org)

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Nat King Cole International Fan Club, c/o Roy Holmes, 18 Rutland Drive, Morden, Surrey SM4 5QH, UK (phone: 020-8648-8858, website: www.highstreets.co.uk/kcc/index.shtml)

King Cole Comments is the club's newsletter and this is issued three times each year. For a free copy, please send a SAE to Roy Holmes.

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/).

A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world. Ken Barnes, who made those great albums with Bing in the 70s, is the Honorary President.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin 4.

Books 'n' Bing

1. The Definitive Bing Crosby Discography, By F. B. (Wig) Wiggins and Jim Reilly. Softcover, 120 pages.

Perry Huntoon has a look at this excellent new discography.

For serious collectors of an artist's recordings, a discographical listing of the artist's work is essential. Otherwise, the collector can never be certain that he (and it usually is the male of the species) has the information at hand to determine the extent to which he wants to pursue an artist's repertoire. In the jazz field, a passion for collecting began as early as the 1930s, but back then, it was difficult to obtain recording information on dates and personnel. A French jazz expert and leader of the *Hot Club of France*, Charles Delaunay, made a major breakthrough with his pioneering *Hot Discography* originally published in 1936 with an expanded edition published in 1947 as *New Hot Discography.* British jazz researcher Brian Rust, who worked in the BBC's record library for several years, perfected the art with his monumental *Jazz Records (1897-1942)* which attempted to document every jazz recording up to the American Federation of Musicians' recording ban of 1942. This work, which has seen several revised editions, is still considered the standard reference work in the field. He followed in the 1970s with the *American Dance Band Discography* and *The Complete Entertainment Discography* both extending only to 1942. The latter volume did include Bing Crosby among the artists represented. Subsequently, other researchers have focused on individual artists or bands making it relatively easy for the jazz record collector to delve into the subject to his heart's content.

This, unfortunately, has not generally carried over to the popular field of the postwar era. I have usually found it difficult to amass any detailed information on favorite singers or groups of the 1940s and '50s. A major reason why I originally joined the American Club Crosby and then the International Crosby Circle was to obtain more detailed information on Bing's recording career. Through the clubs, I was first introduced to Laurence J. Zwisohn's ***Bing Crosby: A Lifetime in* Music**, published in 1977 by Palm Tree Library in California. But as it only listed Bing's recordings in alphabetical order rather than chronologically, it was, needless to say, difficult to use. But the I.C.C. then published in 1980 a compendium by Bert Bishop and John Bassett entitled ***Bing – Just For The Record.*** That slender volume became my Crosby "bible" for several years even though it was little more than a bare bones listing by year of all of Bing's commercial recordings. Nevertheless, it was a tremendous help in organizing my collecting efforts. In 1987, Timothy A. Morgereth's ***Bing Crosby: A Discography, Radio Program List and Filmography*** was published by McFarland & Company. While comprehensive in its listings, it only went through the 78 rpm era, thus ending in 1957. It, therefore, was only of limited use to those of us interested in Bing's entire career (and I was not particularly interested in collecting original 78s of which it listed all known issues).

Recognizing the need for a more authoritative listing, longtime I.C.C. stalwart Wig Wiggins published the compilation, ***Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings From 78s to CDs*** in 2001. Now, we finally had a definitive standard work of all of Bing's commercial studio work, an essential book for all Crosby enthusiasts. That volume immediately replaced the 1980 I.C.C. compendium as my standard reference work and has served well up to the present time. So, one might ask, why the need for a new edition in 2014

considering that Bing's recording career ended with his death in 1977?

The answer lies in the use of the word "definitive" in the title. Since the original publication by Wig, so many newer Crosby CD issues have become available that the compilers deemed it advisable to issue a new edition. This also served the purpose of adding sections that flesh out the work a bit primarily through the use of new indices that highlight albums and CDs and make it easier for cross referencing purposes.

Like the earlier volume, the main focus of the new edition is the section listing "The Studio Recordings" chronologically from *I've Got the Girl* in October 1926 to "The Final Chapter" tunes recorded for the BBC in October 1977, a total of 1,945 songs, some 56 songs more than listed in the earlier volume. A new section, "Unreleased Studio Recordings" adds an interesting dimension to the discography with its short listing of recordings never issued by the original recording company. Following in the format of the earlier edition is "Other Commercial Recordings." This is primarily a listing of recordings originally taken from radio, television or film sources. Thus, Bing's last million seller hit of *True Love* falls into this section. I'm not sure of the rationale for separating these recordings from the main body of studio recordings, but this follows Wig's earlier established pattern. What it does mean is that the numbering system used for Bing's recordings, starting with #1 for *I've Got the Girl* does not follow in a strict chronological sequence as the numbering system for this section is simply tacked onto the end of the main section. This is of no real import, however. A new "Index of Extended Play and Long Play Albums" is a welcome addition as it allows collectors the ability to identify by name the albums referenced by number in the indices. The following "Index of Compact Discs" varies considerably from the original listing. Not a comprehensive listing of every CD that Bing has appeared on, it lists the "best qualified CD version," as judged by the compilers, for use in completing a Crosby CD collection without excessive duplication. A unique and valuable feature! Lastly, the invaluable "Index of Recordings" makes it easy to find any individual tune in its proper place in the discography.

The bottom line is that the new volume is a very useful update of the previous issue. It is not a comprehensive listing of each and every issue of Bing's recordings, nor does it purport to be. It does list the original issues and, at least, as of the date of publication, affords the collector a highly useful listing of available CD reissues. In this regard, it is a valuable addition to the library of all Crosby enthusiasts and is highly recommended even to those who have the earlier edition.

And, for those who recognize that many of Bing's radio recordings are now being issued on CD and haven't been heretofore properly catalogued, the compilers promise the publication of a supplement to this discography that will include such issues. Stay tuned! Wig and Jim Reilly deserve high praise for their efforts and success in making it easier for Crosby fans to achieve their collecting goals.

Perry Huntoon

2. Is That All There Is?: The Strange Life of Peggy Lee

By James Gavin, hardcover, 608 pages. Published by Atria Books; ISBN-10: 1451641680 ISBN-13: 978-1451641684. $20.25

Anita Gates, writing in the New York Times on December 5 had some interesting things to say about this new book.

Peggy Lee had the quintessential unhappy childhood in small-town North Dakota: dead mother (when Lee, then Norma Deloris Egstrom, was 4), alcoholic father, wicked stepmother (who started out as the stern housekeeper) and two devastating house fires in six years. (Lee didn't write the lyric "Is that all there is to a fire?" but every time she sang it, she certainly knew the answer.)

James Gavin's eminently readable biography, "Is That All There Is?: The Strange Life of Peggy Lee," has one aspect of decided strangeness itself. The book could have been called "Peggy Lee Was a Big, Fat Liar." If the scores of people Gavin interviewed are to be believed, Lee, who died in 2002 at 81, invented health problems (before she had real ones), claimed credit for songs she didn't write, built lawsuits on outrageously fabricated events and made up two of the major elements of her mythology: that Lee's stepmother beat her and that Lee and her first husband had decided to remarry right before he died.

Still, there's something admiring in this account of a grossly unhappy woman's persistence, of carefully nurtured and staged talent, of her "Lady and the Tramp" lawsuit against Disney. In summary: Miss Piggy, the temperamental Muppet, began life as Miss Piggy Lee (Lee threatened to sue). But there is an understanding that Lee was not the first celebrity to practice serial egocentric cruelty.

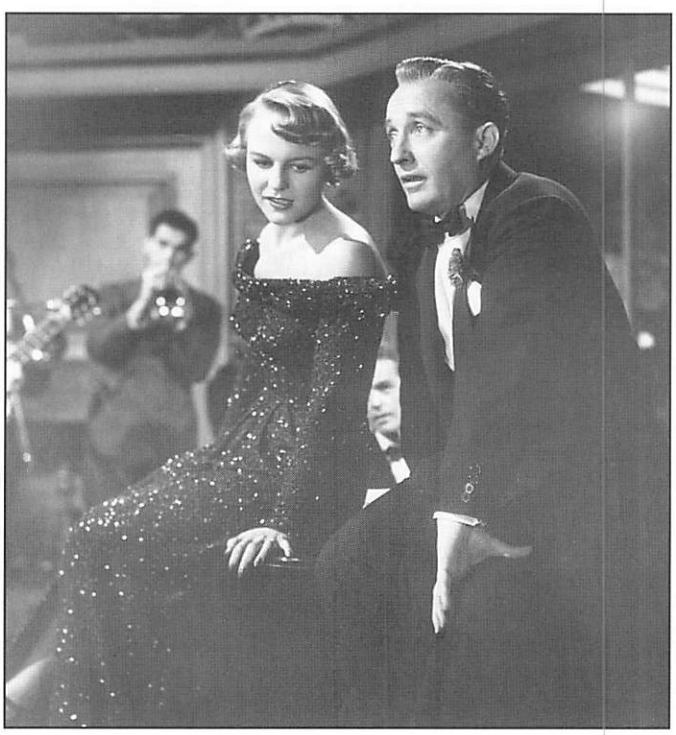
Gavin, the author of the Lena Horne biography "Stormy Weather," can tell a good story, so even his early chapters (often the deadliest part of celebrity biographies) are engrossing. The stepmother probably did detest Lee and did abuse her emotionally. The story picks up steam at the same time Lee's singing career does. Benny Goodman hired her as the vocalist for his big-band-era orchestra in 1941. Lee had hits like "Why Don't You Do Right?" "It's a Good Day," "Lover" and "Fever," her biggest prime-of-life success, which was considered shockingly sexual. She tried movies, starring in a 1952 remake of *The Jazz Singer* and earning a 1955 Oscar nomination for playing a singer with mental problems in *Pete Kelly's Blues*. But singing and songwriting were her gifts, and she spent decades as the

adored and highly paid queen of intimate nightclubs — while fighting her own irrelevance when rock 'n' roll and disco came along. The baby boomer generation remembers her for "Is That All There Is?" Leiber and Stoller's ballad of existential angst that amazed almost everyone by becoming a major hit in 1969.

Between high-paying gigs in New York, Las Vegas and around the world, Lee took to her king-size bed in one luxurious California house after another, and people came to her — so she could treat most of them like servants. She was, by all accounts, an alcoholic, a prescription-drug addict, a heavy smoker and a binge eater frequently out of touch with reality. Between marriages (three of the four were impulsively entered into and predictably brief), she had affairs with her own musicians, a television producer, Frank Sinatra and Quincy Jones, and never got over Robert Preston. Lee blamed everyone but herself for her misery, which seems to be why her self-pitying Broadway solo show, "Peg," closed three days after opening night.

Gavin's book is fascinating, suspenseful, careful, musically detailed and insightful, and sometimes all too painstakingly thorough. Context is half the game, but did Gavin really need to spend almost a page and a half explaining that 1950s America was sexually repressed to set up "Fever"? Or devote three paragraphs to Benny Goodman's back story? Lee, who knew a few things about timing, buildup, excess and exits, might have been Gavin's perfect editor.

Anita Gates



Peggy with "the king of nonchalance".

Our interest of course is the interaction with Bing and there are many favourable references.

"Even in his thirties, Crosby had a paternal air; and Norma, who clung to paternal figures, was hooked. "I literally saved pennies to go to see his movies," she explained. "Tears rolled down my cheeks if the leading lady didn't treat him right." A hymn to lost love that he sang in Mississippi, "Down by the River", haunted her: "Once we walked alone, down by the river/All the world our own..." His intimate delivery profoundly inspired her sense of how a song should be sung. (page 35).

Talking about Peggy Lee's husband's (Dave Barbour) serious illness, Gavin writes:

A surgeon cut away a portion his stomach. Barbour survived, but stayed in critical condition for days. Lee drew comfort from her girlhood idol Bing Crosby, who had hosted her numerous times on his radio show and in turn became her friend. Crosby called her each morning to check that Barbour had made it through the night. He offered money, blood, even his babysitting services. (page 96)

Peggy's appearance in *Mr. Music* is mentioned as well.

Just before Christmastime, audiences caught one of their last glimpses of the Barbours together. Bing Crosby had thrilled Lee by recommending her for a cameo in his latest film. Mr Music. At a penthouse party, surrounded by revelers, she and Crosby, accompanied by Dave's combo, sing Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen's homespun slice of philosophy, "Life Is So Peculiar." Lee had grown in confidence since her nervous appearances in The Powers Girl and Stage Door Canteen, and she and Crosby prove a perfect match—a rising minimalist alongside the king of nonchalance. (page 121)

3. Hope: Entertainer of the Century

By Richard Zoglin, Hardcover: 576 pages, Publisher: Simon & Schuster (November 4, 2014), ISBN-10: 1439140278, ISBN-13: 978-1439140277, $21.78 from Amazon

I have not read this huge book about Bob Hope but have seen many extracts in the newspapers which rather put me off it. This may be unfair but this extract for instance rather soured me.

Though he always had words of affection for Crosby in public, in private he was less charitable. Many years later, after Crosby died, Hope was sitting in an NBC editing room looking over film clips for a TV special he was preparing on their screen work together. Associate producer Marcia Lewis was startled when Hope turned to her and made a blunt admission.

"You know, I never liked Bing. He was a son of a bitch. In all their years of working together, Hope said, "He never had Dolores and me to dinner." (page 243)

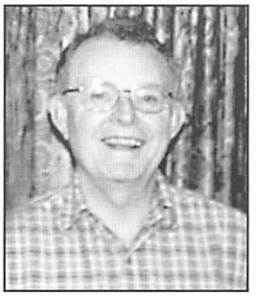
Kathryn Crosby has refuted this earlier in this issue and, as an example, on page 321 of her book "My Last Years with Bing" she describes how Bob and Dolores

went to the Crosby home in 1973 for a Thanksgiving Dinner. The families lived together for three months in England in 1961 as well. So clearly we cannot place much reliance on the recollection of an associate producer from 1977. I wish the author had examined the claim more thoroughly. The quote has been mentioned to me by several friends who had happened to notice it and I have spent some time putting them right.

There are however many favourable references to Bing in the book and undoubtedly the newspapers picked out those which would cause a stir. One extract that is worth considering was this from page 158 which looks at the Hope / Crosby working relationship.

> *Yet they brought out the best in each other, both onstage and off. Hope loosened up Crosby, unleashed his sense of humor. Crosby gave Hope a role model, both as a businessman and as a manager of his own career. Crosby was arguably the greater artist. But Hope was more driven, more responsive to the changing entertainment landscape, and, in the end, had a broader and more lasting impact on the world of show business. He simply tried harder.*

Celluloid Crosby



BBC television had a couple of treats in store for both Crosby and Sinatra fans last Christmas. On December 23rd "Happy Holidays with Bing & Frank" was broadcast and on the following evening *Robin and the 7 Hoods* was shown. The first was the colour version of the U. S. ABC television programme recorded in October 1957 and shown in black and white the following December 20th.

2014 was the first opportunity viewers in the U.K. had of watching the show, although the audio track had been in circulation for many years. Like the 1964 film, the television show was very much a Sinatra initiative. He directed the programme and used his current orchestrator, Nelson Riddle, as the show's musical director. However, the linking dialogue sequences were written by Bill Morrow who had a long association with Bing on radio.

Sinatra's production company was behind *Robin and the* 7 *Hoods* and once again Nelson Riddle was used to score and conduct the musical sequences. The movie began life as an intended joint production with Gene Kelly. The executive producer was Howard Koch. The overall plan was for two further films to follow. The second would see Sinatra and Kelly co-starring. This was to be followed by a third with Sinatra appearing and

Bing leads the cast in singing "Mr. Booze".

Kelly directing. In Clive Hirschhorn's biography of Gene Kelly he recounts subsequent events from Kelly's perspective. Sinatra was always unwilling to become involved in rehearsals when making motion pictures. Kelly recounts: "Frank kept telling Howard Koch that he'd be arriving the next day, then the day after and so on until I decided the tension and the waiting wasn't doing any of us any good, and I told Jack Warner I was quitting." The film was to be distributed by Warner Bros. where Sinatra currently based his film making ventures. Kelly continued: "I really loved Frank and that was the reason I was walking out because it was my intention to remain friendly with him, and if I stayed on, as a kind of paid labourer, our relationship would be over."

Sinatra liked to call the shots, which is why Gordon Douglas was assigned direction duties. Sinatra could direct Douglas. At the outset of filming the atmosphere on set could be described as laid back rather than chaotic but after the three day unit shutdown following the assassination of John F. Kennedy matters became too relaxed. On the audio commentary for the film's DVD release Frank Sinatra Jr. said: "The spell had kind of been broken." This coincides with Bing's own observations. He noted: "Then there were a lot of delays [after the shutdown]. And our co-ordination fell apart."

As mentioned earlier, Sinatra based his offices at Warner Bros. There were strong links with the Warner operation. Eventually Reprise, the record label that Sinatra founded, would be part of an alliance with Warner Bros. Reprise was not the financial or artistic success Sinatra had hoped for. Its sale to Warners would be seen as a relief. As far as his film career was concerned, Sinatra made full use of his tenure at the studio. There were several standing sets on what was designated the Warner Bros. (Burbank) Ranch. These were utilised for a number of "locations". It is interesting to note how they had been used in an earlier filmic life.

Here are a few examples which I found interesting when viewing *Robin and the* 7 *Hoods* some half century after its initial release:

> The courthouse where Frank Sinatra sings "My Kind of Town" was sited on the New York Street set first used in 1928. It had been seen in *The Daughter of Rosie O'Grady* (1950) when Debbie Reynolds danced on the courtroom steps. In the same year as *Robin* was filming it formed the exterior of the Opera House seen in *My Fair Lady.*
>
> River City High School seen in *The Music Man* for the "Seventy-six Trombones" sequence was dressed as the police station in *Robin and the* 7 *Hoods.* It reverted to educational usage in *1971/72* when it became Josiah Kessel College for the "Jimmy Stewart Show" on television.
>
> On the standing set of Warner Bros. Midwest Street stood the building that was a doctor's office in *Johnny Belinda (1948)* and Sal Mineo's house in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). It became Bing's home in *Robin and the* 7 *Hoods.*

And how did Sinatra acknowledge his debt to Jack Warner? The head of studio production had provided a studio roof over Sinatra's head for several years in the 1960s? At a Friar's Roast for Warner the year after *Robin* was released he said: "Mr. Warner and his partners have shown this town the true meaning of brotherhood: they were brothers and they were hoods."

Robin and the 7 *Hoods* was a musical swansong for both Crosby and Sinatra. Bing's fee for *Robin* was $100,000. Before his next, and final substantial film appearance in *Stagecoach* (1966) he probably netted more dollars from his 1964 situation comedy television series but it did little to enhance his worth at the cinema box-office. Both Crosby and Sinatra quit musicals at a time when the genre's golden age was over. It was an honourable departure and when Warner-Pathe, the U.K. releasing arm of Warner Bros., selected an opening feature for their West End flagship it was *Robin and the* 7 *Hoods.* The Warner cinema in London had undergone a three month long major interior modernisation when it reopened with the Sinatra/Crosby film.

I'll end on what I regard as a fair assessment of the film from a *Variety* review. Having commented on the film generally, reference is made to three of the movie's players. I expected Dean Martin or Sammy Davis Jr. to be singled out alongside Crosby and Sinatra. Not so.

> "Performance-wise, [Peter] Falk comes out best. His comic gangster is a pure gem. Sinatra, of course, is smooth and Crosby in a 'different' type of role rates a big hand."

And we know how Falk's career rose to greater heights. When Bing turned down the television role of Columbo because it would interfere with his golfing if provided Falk with a thirty years of fame.

Keith Parkinson k.parkinson1941@btinternet.com

Confessions of a Soundtrack Junkie

Bruce Hanson joined the ICC a year or two ago. He teaches theatre, pottery, and sculpture in Norfolk, Virginia. Bruce is the author of two published books thus far, *The Peter Pan Chronicles* (1993) and *Peter Pan On Stage and Screen* (2010) and during the last few years he has been writing a book, *For the Record: Confessions of a Soundtrack Junkie*, which is a compilation of humorous anecdotes about collecting records. One of the chapters is about his attempts as a child of the late sixties to buy the records from the film, *White Christmas* and we thought this would be of interest to members. After describing the *White Christmas* film in some depth, Bruce goes on to say:

For a few years after the re-release of *White Christmas*, it was broadcast on N.B.C.'s *Saturday Night*

at the Movies and it became a tradition for my brother Wayne and I to watch it while my parents were out (where were they?) with Wayne making disparaging remarks about Rosemary Clooney as he would later do about Doris Day and June Allyson. Each Christmas, since 1962 or so, I would look in the record departments of Topps and other stores to see if they sold the soundtrack album but to no avail. Years later, now eleven and living in New York City, Nana, my grandmother, took my brothers and me to Radio City Music Hall for their annual Christmas show and movie. Nana was already aware of my fondness for Rosie as there was a huge photo of her (pulled from an old N.Y. Daily News) hanging in my bedroom. "Why does he have a poster of Rosemary Clooney?" she asked my mother. "Better her than a boy," Mom answered back. Did she know something I didn't know?

While strolling along 7th Avenue to Radio City, we stopped in a record shop that specialized in out-of-print records. Nana bought a record for Wayne (he and I can no longer remember what it was) while I browsed through their show section. Then, looking up at some records displayed on racks around the store, I spotted a ten inch album of *White Christmas* songs all performed by Rosemary Clooney on the Columbia label. I don't know where I got the nerve (perhaps I was in shock) but I begged Nana to buy it for me. She asked the old woman who ran the shop if she could look at the album and then, after a few moments gave it back to the shopkeeper, stating, "Nonsense, that record is used! And there's a small stain on the front cover. There's no way I am going to pay $30 for a used record." I was deflated.

Two years later, on November 13, 1966, I received a reel to reel tape recorder for my Bar Mitzvah. During the Christmas season, I taped the audio of the whole film of *White Christmas* which I listened to many times until I was in high school. Then, one day, I passed that same 7th Avenue record shop with my friends John and Philip. Although there was a scary looking man with huge glasses working there, I asked him if he might have a copy of *White Christmas* with Rosemary Clooney. He replied that he did not think so as he was sure they had sold their only copy a few years before. However, he asked someone in the back room and out stepped the same old lady I had met there two years before. And, in her hands was that same copy of *White Christmas* with the same stain on the cover. I could not retain my excitement, telling the woman I had wanted that very album since I was eleven years old. Inquiring about the price, she laid her kind eyes upon me and then at the album and barked, "Forty dollars." Surely, it should have gone down in price! Once again I walked out the store empty handed.

A few years more were to pass when, now in college with a part time job, I once more marched into that store, saw the same album with the same stain, picked it up very nonchalantly, and asked the price, the old lady replied forty dollars. "I'll give you thirty!" I answered back with confidence. "This same copy of this record has been in this store for at least ten years. You can see no one else wants it."

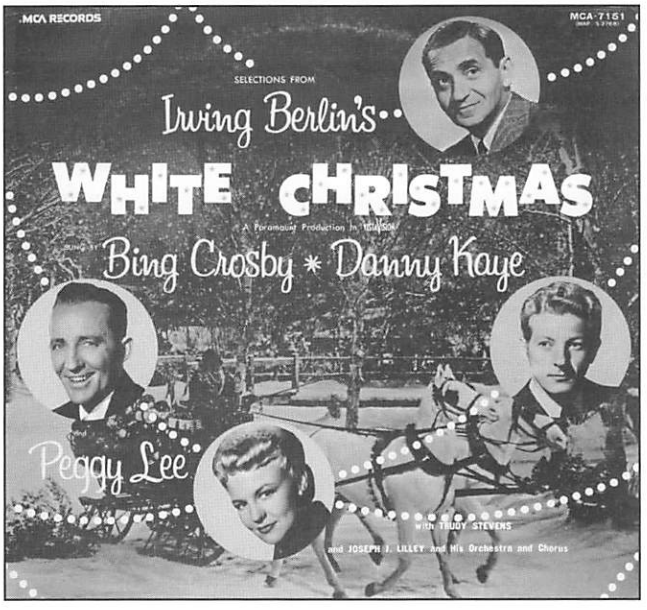
"It's forty dollars!"

"Thirty-five, and not a penny more," I replied with equal sternness.

"Forty dollars!"

"It's a deal," I agreed as I opened my wallet to pay her. At last, the treasure was mine. She placed the record in a bag and loudly pronounced, "That will be forty-two dollars and eighty cents, tax!"

I looked through my wallet even as I was perfectly aware that all I had left was carfare for the train and ferry ride home from Manhattan to Staten Island. "I don't seem to have any more money," I admitted rather timidly. The woman was about to take the record out of the bag but looking at me, she miraculously softened, took my forty dollars, and gave me the record. "You owe me two dollars and eighty cents!" A week later I returned to pay the tax.



The Japanese pressing

It was another four years before I learned about the Decca album with Bing, Peggy and Danny Kaye and still ten more before I finally was able to obtain a copy of that album, albeit, a Japanese pressing. As a collector of vinyl in all formats I finally bought the 78 rpm album versions, which are even rarer than their 45 rpm and LP counterparts. "Don't you have this?" my own counterpart, Dale, asked when I proudly showed him the Clooney 78 rpm set.

"Yes," I answered. "But not in this format."

Every Thanksgiving Eve, I watch *White Christmas* on my home-video system (now in stunning Blu-Ray) and after that weekend, I listen to both records in their CD formats as I drive to school in a Christmas Holiday mood. Bing and Rosemary do that for me!

Bruce K. Hanson

Sounds Natural

Brian Willey's article about the radio series he did with Bing also appeared in the August 2014 edition of *Prospero,* the BBC pensioners' newspaper. This prompted John F Burton (ex BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol) to offer up his own 'happy memories' of making a radio programme with Bing in 1975. The article appeared in the October issue and Margaret Kliskey drew our attention to it. With grateful thanks to *Prospero* we reproduce the article here.

Bing was the first singer of whom, when a very small boy in the 1930s, I became aware and I was soon a great admirer of his. My parents had several 78rpm gramophone records of songs he had recorded in those years. Two of them, 'Home on the Range' and 'The Last Roundup', have been favourites of mine ever since.

So, having heard in the 1970s that he was very interested in wildlife, it was not surprising that I invited him at that period to participate as a guest in a series of radio programmes called *Sounds Natural* that I had devised and produced for Radio 4 and which featured celebrities with a keen interest in wildlife.

An enthusiastic golfer, Bing had become friends with the BBC's golfing commentator, the late Henry Longhurst, who, as it happened, was also very interested in wildlife and had already agreed to participate in one of the *Sounds Natural* programmes. I mentioned to him that I would like to invite Bing and he informed me that he would shortly be coming to Britain to play golf at St Andrews and to record a couple of albums in London. Henry said that Bing was a very early riser and advised me to telephone him at his St Andrews hotel early in the morning before he went out for a round of golf before breakfast.

It was with some trepidation at phoning anyone as early as 7am that I picked up the telephone in my office at BH Bristol. I need not have worried, Bing was up and about and very amiable. He said he would be glad to take part in the programme and could fit it in one day when he came down to London. As he couldn't be sure of a possible date at that stage, he told me he would telephone me as soon as he knew. I mentioned that in a few days' time I would be lunching with Henry Longhurst in his idyllically situated home on top of the South Downs near Brighton. Nevertheless, it was rather to my surprise that on that day, 16 July 1975, during lunch, the telephone rang and Henry's wife answered it and returned to say, 'It's Bing Crosby for you, John.' And so it was: to tell me that he had hired a house in London's Holland Park and could meet me there one morning in a week or so's time to record the interview.

This was duly arranged and the regular *Sounds Natural* interviewer, the late Derek Jones, a popular West Country broadcaster, and I arrived together with a BBC recording engineer based in London. As soon as we had set up our recording gear ready to go, Bing joined us and quickly made us feel at home. I explained the form that the programme would take. This included the subsequent insertion of sound recordings from the BBC's collection of wildlife sounds to illustrate his anecdotes and memories, plus extracts I had selected from a few of the songs that he had recorded that were appropriate to the programme's theme.

I had previously discovered that he was a very good mimic of those American wild birds with which he was familiar. In discussing these with him, I mentioned that one would be an extract from 'My Blue Heaven', which refers to the call of the whip-poor-will, a bird related to our nightjar, which also calls at night. Bing said he had sung so many different songs in his lifetime and he couldn't remember them all including that one. So rather self-consciously in the presence of such a famous crooner, I crooned the first couple of lines to him, which sparked his memory and he joined in, quipping at the end, 'We should have got together sooner, John!' Other songs of Bing's that I included were 'Mr Meadowlark', where Bing gives very good imitations of the song of this American bird of fields and meadows, and bobwhite. The bobwhite is a common small American gamebird related to our quail whose name is onomatopoeic: its typical call sounding like a whistled 'bob-bob-white', also mimicked perfectly by Bing.

To demonstrate just how good his imitations were, in the final programme as transmitted, I subsequently added actual sound recordings of these birds for comparison.

Provided by me with a series of questions in addition to his own that I knew would launch Bing on a string of his wildlife memories, Derek, a masterly interviewer, evoked a delightfully chatty conversation

that pleased me immensely. Bing had been a keen wildfowler, hunting within United States laws, but his concern for the conservation of water birds and other wildlife was sincere.

After the interview had finished, Bing, Derek, the recording engineer and I continued to chat for another hour about birds, fishing, colour blindness (from which Bing suffered) and other topics. Derek and I both felt that Bing genuinely enjoyed chatting about his interests in wildlife and its conservation as a change from being asked about his show business career. To my delight I learned after we had finished and took our leave of Bing and his son Gary *(sic – it must have been Harry),* who had joined us meanwhile, that the engineer, whose name I regret to say I've forgotten, had let the tape run during this informal chat. I was able to have an edited version of it put on a CD, a copy of which is now deposited with Wildscreen in Bristol.

The programme itself was not, as far as I am aware, selected for preservation in the BBC Sound Archives, but recently, as a result of an appeal, I was kindly sent a CD copy by a member of the Wildlife Sound Recording Society who had recorded it off air at the time. It is my intention to offer this to BBC Heritage.

Altogether, as Derek Jones wrote in his account of the occasion (*Microphones and Muddy Boots*, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, Devon, 1987), it was 'two hours of absolute joy'.

Like Derek, I am happy that we were able to meet and talk with Bing, a charming man whose distinctive singing voice we had both greatly admired. A couple of years after our meeting, Bing passed away, appropriately enough, on a golf course. To both of us life wasn't the same without him.

A couple of months after the repeat broadcast of the programme in January 1976, I received a very nice personal letter from Bing, saying, among other topics, that he had listened to the tape of the programme I had sent him and was 'much impressed' by it. I still have and treasure the letter.

John F Burton

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Frans Vanderkolff, by email from The Netherlands.

I was wondering if you are aware of the fact that while shopping at Amazon it is sometimes worthwhile to check the Amazon websites of other countries as well. An example: On Amazon.de I found a German version of the Blu-ray Disc of *Stagecoach* (with both English and German soundtracks) for €14,50. Couldn't find this item on the English website of Amazon. It is in fact there, but not tagged with "Bing Crosby" ... There are also some price differences which might be of interest ... but one should be aware of extra postage charges. I thought this information might be useful to members, maybe in a sideline or so.

Looking through the English, German and French sites of Amazon, I feel we need another reference work: Translations of Bing's film titles!

Greg Van Beek, by email from West Bend, Wisconsin, USA

My friend, ICC member Scott Hughes of Oakland, CA, recently visited Honolulu, HI on holiday. While there, he called on the Bishop Museum (www.bishopmuseum.org) and was surprised to find a tribute to Bing on exhibit in the Hawaiian Hall. Nice to know there's at least one public place left in Hawaii that remembers fondly Bing's picture *Waikiki Wedding*.

(Editor: As information which is time sensitive reaches me, I fire off emails to those members whose email addresses I have and I also post the information on Crosby Fan World, Facebook and sometimes Twitter. Howard Leader of Radio Lincolnshire here in the UK set up an interview with me in November and I circulated the details in advance in case anyone wanted to tune in. At least one person listened in Australia...)

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia

I've just had an opportunity to listen and I must say that I enjoyed not only the music selection but also your interview. As I listened to you I realised that it must be 12 years since I'd heard your voice (at the wonderful Hofstra gathering). It was especially interesting to learn how you became interested in Bing and that interest has

obviously become an important part of your life. Your contribution to the magazine and club has provided a great deal of pleasure to so many folk, such as me, and thanks again for keeping us informed of news such as this radio program and other emails you send.

The information about the Crosby Christmas Internet Radio helped me get into the Christmas spirit. Bing was in his element singing Christmas songs wasn't he. His biggest-selling Aussie single was the Decca 1944 release with his 1942 recordings of 'Adeste Fideles' and 'Silent Night, Holy Night'. The 1935 recordings were still on sale here then and selling well but were deleted from the catalogue in 1945.

(Editor: What kind words from Graham! Another matter I circulated was a special offer on tickets to the London Jazz Festival for a concert hosted by the Jazz Repertory Company at London's Cadogan Hall featuring the music of Cole Porter as sung by Bing in High Society. *Colin Stewart was one who took up the offer and he writes:)*

Colin Stewart, Cambridge, UK

Enjoyed your interview with Howard Leader, gave a very positive picture of the club; hadn't heard the story of the twins helping with an early office departure to get to the 1976 Palladium show!

Thought you might like to see the programme for the concert based on the Newport Jazz Festivals; *High Society* was made the year before the 1956 one which brought the Duke back into the front line of swing orchestras, so it provided a good mix with an excellent band led by Pete Long, a very able clarinetist ("that's Ed Hall")!

They played *High Society* straight from the original score, Enrico Tomasso, a perfect Louis in both voice and trumpet playing, starting with the calypso. The Crosby numbers were sung by Tom "Spats" Langham who accompanied himself on the guitar which was effective; although he hadn't got Bing's timbre or perfect pitch he did full justice to those lovely Cole Porter songs.

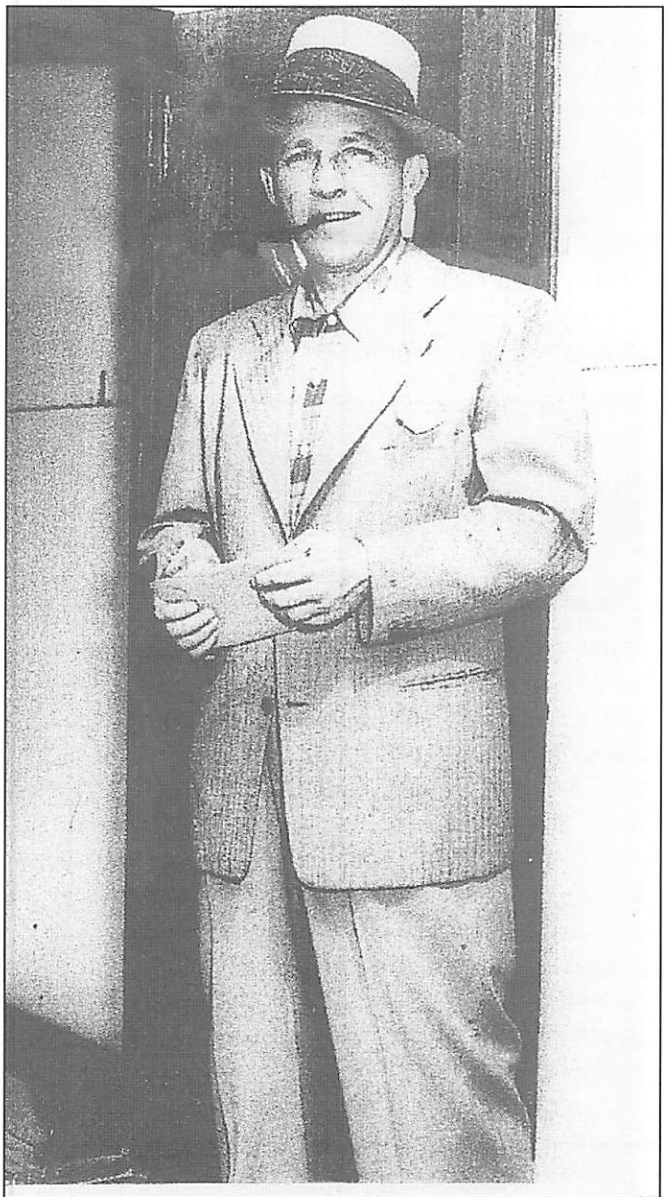
Ian Mackenzie was excellent in the Sinatra numbers as was Georgina Jackson in "who wants ...." as well as her bit in "True Love" (she had a real jazz style in the second part of the programme). "Did You Evah" worked well as did "Now You Has Jazz" with Tomasso and Langham hitting the highs for the finale. All very favourably received and applauded by a full house.

You will see the Jazz Repertory Company are featuring past greats in their programmes including Bix and Bing in their Whiteman days on November 22.

Fred J. Wadsworth, Basildon, Essex, UK

I came across this picture on the Queen Mary. I don't know if it's any use to you. The text accompanying the picture said:

> Bing Crosby, although not remembered as being the most generous tipper on board, was nevertheless a popular guest. When he wanted to get away from the crowd he would slip along to the photographic darkroom, settle back into the same old chair, take out his pipe and puff contentedly on it while chatting to the photographers. He did this so often that very soon he was being roped in to help, and it wasn't unusual to find him counting photographs and numbering them. He seemed to enjoy the atmosphere and camaraderie that this small retreat provided and regularly sought the peace and relaxation so often craved by traveling celebrities. He would show his gratitude at the end of the voyage by sending a large crate of beer to the darkroom.



Bing Crosby with his personal Ocean Pictures' photographs, after collecting them from the darkroom on the *Queen Mary*.

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex, SS4 1RZ, UK

The winter edition of BING has prompted me to write to you on one or two points of interest.

Regarding your list of Bing's vinyl albums on CD (pages 14-15), and in particular your bracketed note that "Holiday In Europe" has only appeared on a Japanese CD, I hasten to point out that seven of the 12 tracks were issued in 1999 on a CD of UK origin entitled "Legends

Of The 20th Century" (EMI Records Ltd. 7243 522815 27). This splendid CD also contained a selection of tracks culled from the albums "That Travellin' Two Beat" and "Bing and Louis".

Looking further into the magazine on page 29, I was surprised at David Currington's assumption that I had joined that elite group of discographers who have departed this earth for higher planes. Please note that I am still alive and kicking at "Bingville" in Essex. At least that was the case the last time I checked my pulse!

Finally, I was elated to read on page 33 that my 1976 message from Bing was so well received at the 2014 meeting in Leeds. Bob Halls correctly observes that Bing had a natural flair when called upon to speak into a tape recorder. However, there is a well-known saying that begins "To err is human" and Bing was no exception! Listeners to the tape were surely delighted and amused at Bing's difficulty in remembering the name of a charity - the Association for Aid to Retarded Children - and to hear him desperately ask "What's it called?" after several fluffed attempts! Notwithstanding this, Bing was an expert at talking non-stop into a microphone and I am proud to be the recipient of four such messages that Bing sent to me between 1974 and 1977.

In his report, Bob wonders how many owners of Bing's correspondence actually possess an authentic signature. One of my prized possessions is a letter and envelope; both fully handwritten and sent to me by Bing from his flat in London in October 1977. I also own various items signed by him in my presence. However, it is a little known fact that typed letters sent out from Bing's offices in Beverly Hills were actually signed by his secretary, Lillian Murphy, whose initials (in lower case) always appeared at the foot of each letter. A collector who once visited the offices was present on the occasion when Bing was instructing the typist in how to copy his signature. Bearing this in mind, I inwardly grieve over the fact that so-called 'signed' letters from Bing have fetched high prices in auction houses that specialise in celebrity autographs, and I feel sorry for anyone who has paid dearly for what they believe is the genuine article.

Dean Uelmen, by email from Campbellsport, WI, USA

I recently came across your BING magazine website and was thrilled to see that you had posted a digital version of your remarkable book, *Bing Crosby - Day by Day*.

I immediately searched for the entry for August 15, 1935. My jaw dropped when I read the following:

> **August 15,** Thursday. (10:00–11:00 p.m.) Appears on Paul Whiteman's *Kraft Music Hall* in New York (for NBC from station WEAF) singing songs from the film *Two for Tonight*. Bing carries on to Ben Marden's Riviera Club (just over the George Washington Bridge) for Paul Whiteman's opening night where he is the guest star. Renews his friendship with Bob Hope there. It is said that Bing does both shows for nothing "in friendly memory of the days when he was one of Paul's boys." Whiteman presents Bing with a humidor made by Alfred Dunhill and inscribes it inside: "To Bing, In deep admiration, Paul, August 15, 1935."

A number of years ago I purchased the very humidor mentioned in this account. When I purchased the humidor, it came with three of Bing's well-worn pipes which store neatly inside the box. It's one of my most prized possessions.

The humidor is exactly as your book describes, including the precise wording of the inscription from Paul Whiteman which is inside the lid on the humidor's copper lining.

I was very excited to find this mentioning of the humidor's history in a source as reputable as yours. I feel as though you've added tremendously to the provenance of my treasure.

Ron McBride, by email from Olathe, Kansas, USA.

The winter issue of the magazine was fantastic. Imagine my surprise to see there was a show called "Bing and Bob" in my hometown (Olathe, Kansas) and I didn't know a thing about it. Consequently, I didn't get to see it...

Carmela Amari, by email from Staten Island, New York, USA

First, I want to thank you for the album list in the recent issue of BING. Also, I loved reading about Mary Carlisle in *Celluloid Crosby* by Keith Parkinson. She was always one of my favorite leading ladies. She was great opposite Bing. They had great chemistry and they looked good together. He was handsome and she was very beautiful. Thanks Mary for making the films better with your acting, personality and beauty!

Thank you Malcolm for all the work you do for Bingdom.

Keith Parkinson, St. Helens, Lancs., UK

I spent Christmas listening to three of the Universal CDs. The one I didn't buy was American Masters. I wasn't sure if there was any new material on that disc. I will wait for the next *Keeping Track* listing by Richard Baker to check it out. I assume Richard will be taking a new look at the discs as his last review was written before he had heard their content.

Of the three CDs I purchased only one deserves an award. That goes to the Irving Berlin Songbook. The award is for the worst remastering of any issue by a major record company. The volume levels were all over the place.

As far as the winter issue of BING is concerned it reached your usual high standard. I particularly enjoyed the article by Anton Garcia-Fernandez.

Having read it, I gave the "America, I Hear You Singing" album a new spin.

Charles Wilkinson, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Sorry for my late renewal but I had set the relevant page aside and forgot. My grateful thanks to you and to the whole team for their great work for the Crosby cause and for us too. Without you we wouldn't have our splendid magazine with all the interesting reading therein and the release of CDs and DVDs etc. Our lives are enriched by what you do. Long may you continue.
(Editor: What a lovely letter. Makes it all worthwhile. Back in January, Wig received a rather nice letter too!)

Philip Crosland, Wilmington, Delaware, USA

At age 96 I am no longer able to enjoy reading books and magazines. Please remove me from your listing of BING readers.

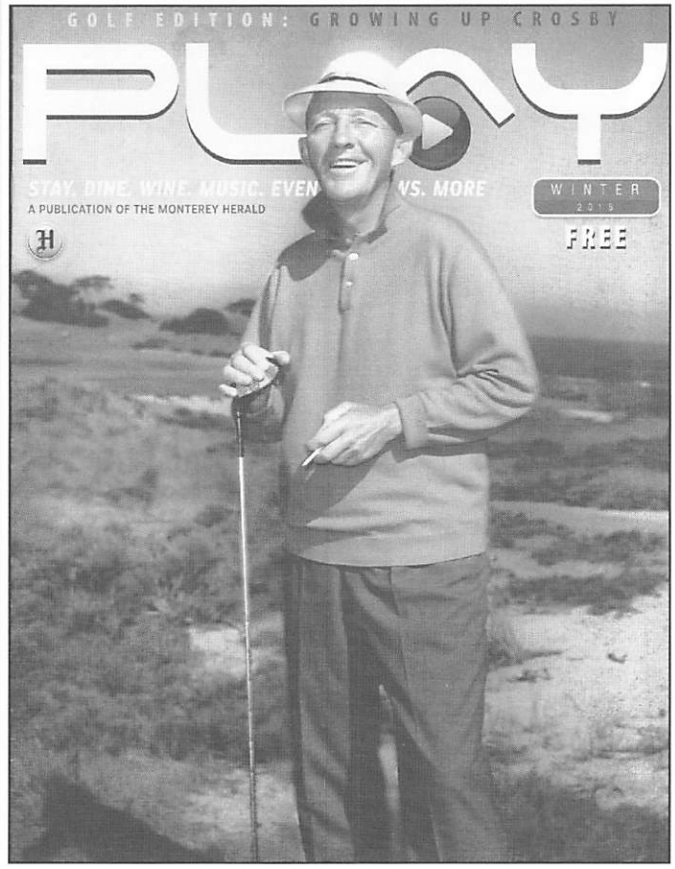
I became a Bing Crosby fan while in high school in the 1930s. During World War II I was in the Navy. I told my mother to make weekly visits to a music store and buy any new Crosby records available. After the war, as you know, I purchased CDs from you and have quite a collection of 78s, CDs and BING magazines.

I also have two of Bing's biographies, both favorable and unfavorable. It's been great being a Crosby fan and I love your magazine, but please remove me from your list.

Please accept the enclosed check as a small symbol of my appreciation.
(Editor: Philip's "small symbol" was a check for $250.00! Wig has gratefully thanked him on behalf of the ICC.)

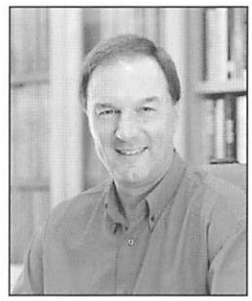
Carolyn Schneider, by email from Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Attached is a copy of the recent magazine cover published by the Monterey Herald newspaper. It came out the first part of February during the AT&T Golf Tournament and as a remembrance of earlier days and the Crosby Pro-Am.



CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland takes a look at all things Bing



Ken Crossland has been "South of the Border"...

A recent holiday in Mexico served as a reminder of just how significant the songs and music of that country were to Bing's career. We had barely been there two minutes before the first mariachi band - "strolling players" Bing would have undoubtedly christened them - appeared and delivered what was almost a Crosby songbook. Their first title was "El Rancho Grande", quickly followed by "Three Caballeros", a melody that I instantly recognised but had to sing in my head almost the whole way through before the title came to me.

Other familiar tunes followed and it set my mind a-meandering over both the breadth and longevity of Bing's association with Mexican music. Unlike his dalliance with French, the Spanish lyric came easily to him and judging by the amount of time he spent south of the border, it seemed to be accompanied by a genuine fondness for the country itself. Indeed, is there any other genre that has accounted for more Crosby album themes than the various takes on El Bingo? That title was first used for an American album, in the literal sense, of 78s in the late Forties and was quickly followed by a set of 45s and a 10" LP, each with the same cover and legend. The era of 12" long players saw the set expanded to become "In A Little Spanish Town", the only Mexican release *not* to feature Bing in a sombrero. In 1960, Bing found himself in the MGM studios to record "El Señor Bing", an album unique in having the greatest disparity between the quality of the cover (high) and the content (dire, although the fault is was as much with Billy May's complete lack of authenticity in the arrangements as it was with the Crosby vocals).

As far as I can see, the Mexican genre was the only one that Bing used for more than one concept album

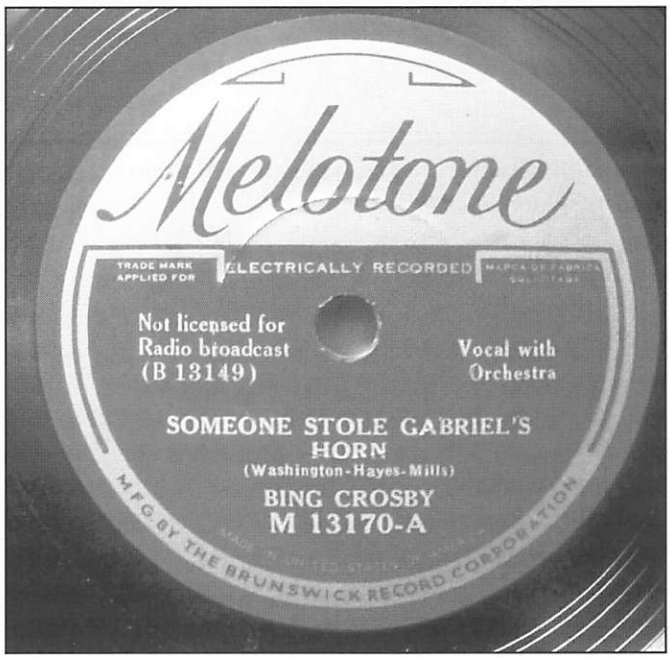
during the years from 1955 to 1977 (you could argue, I guess, that "Hey Jude" and "Thoroughly Modern Bing" were both "pop" albums, but it's hardly a genre). Bing returned to his seemingly favourite territory in 1975 for "Bingo Viejo", marginally more authentic than its predecessor but to my ears at least, a much more pleasurable listening experience. And in passing, as a "modern" album presumably with master tapes available, and evidence from the Anahuac alternative LP of several alternate takes, I wonder why this has not been given higher priority in the BCE re-issue programme?

"Bingo Viejo" contained one track that was clearly a particular favourite of Bing's. After our mariachi encounter, we found ourselves in the piano bar of our resort where an accomplished pianist entertained. Happy to take requests, I fired off "Cuando Caliente El Sol", a song from the 1975 album and one that Bing sang so well. It forever recalls in my mind, the high point of Bing's final renaissance. It was the summer of 1976, exceptionally hot by British standards, and Bing in regal splendour holding centre stage at the London Palladium. There would be another visit the following year but by then, Bing had been incapacitated by the Pasadena fall and whilst vocally, he sounded the same, physically he wasn't the same man. No, June 1976 was the high spot.

My Mexican vacation offered time for both reading and listening, and I finally got around to "My Last Years with Bing". One of the photos offers a peek behind the scenes at the rehearsal for Bing's Pasadena show, with Bing and Kathryn in dress-down mode working through "Everything Old Is New Again". That song, written by the Australian then-husband of Liza Minnelli in 1974 (and which was subsequently used on the movie "All That Jazz" in 1979), was also a staple of the 1976 and 1977 concerts. Scrubbed up and tuxed, it prompted a nice exchange between Bing and Kathryn.

> "Something I put together for the Inaugural," said Bing, referring to his suit.
> "Carter's?" said Kathryn.
> "No, Roosevelt," said Bing.
> "FDR?"
> "Teddy," said Bing.

The husband and wife duet was light musical fare but my experience lately has revealed that the song's title does indeed ring true. Readers will recall my mission to complete my collection of Crosby 78s and indeed as far as the UK issues go, I am almost there. The opportunity also arose however to garner some American releases plus many others from countries around the world. The American releases are of course the most interesting, in part because they are true state of origin, but also because of the number and variety of re-releases that took place. So, for the first time ever, I found myself handling copies of discs on previously unseen labels such as Banner, Oriole, Perfect and Melotone.



The first question that goes through the mind of any collector who finds something he hasn't seen before, is how many more of these are there? That was when a little bell rang at the back of my mind. Didn't I have a book somewhere that listed all the 78s up to 1950 on all their various release labels? I did. It's a book, "Crosby on Record", by Edward J. Mello and Tom McBride that runs to 100 pages and details all of the Crosby 78 releases, both home and abroad, from 1926 to 1950. I don't recall where and when I came by my - mint - copy of this publication, although such things usually came to me as gifts from my dear friend, Al Sutton. I never thought of it as anything other than a historical artefact, but suddenly, it had been elevated to the status of oracle. In its pages, I found that there were 16 releases on the Banner label, 16 Orioles, 16 Perfects and 16 Melotones, all of them drawn from Bing's American Brunswick period between 1931 and 1934. And of course, the new question now (answers if you know it, please) is why just 16 on each label? Surely not a coincidence.

Ken Crossland ken54@blueyonder.co.uk

BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

The PBS Documentary – *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* – was the event of the year and we have reviewed this in depth earlier in the magazine. Crosby films and other items seen on TV since last time include:

A Connecticut Yankee	TCM
Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank	getTV
High Society	TCM
High Time	FXM
Holiday Inn	AMC
Road to Utopia	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
That's Entertainment	TCM
White Christmas (many showings)	AMC

In our last issue, we described the UK transmission of a program called *Discovering Film*: *Bing Crosby*. This has now been shown in the USA and David Lobosco spotted it on a Verizon cable channel called Cinemoi in January. It appeared as *Bing Crosby (Stars of the Silver Screen)*. This was a warm and positive look at the groaner's movie career but it contained many inaccuracies.

Boardwalk Empire, **the** period crime series airing on the premium cable channel HBO finished in November. The final series was set in 1931 and Bing's voice was used throughout. In the finale, we heard "It Must Be True" on the soundtrack as the main character and his wife danced in an empty room.

USA & Canadian Radio

Crosby Christmas Internet Radio

The big news was Crosby Christmas Internet Radio being broadcast 24/7 by Bing Crosby Enterprises. It featured classic Crosby holiday radio programs, rare unreleased recordings from Bing's personal archive, and of course, his holiday recordings. Also featured were tracks from *Bing Crosby: Rediscovered - The Soundtrack,* the companion CD to the documentary that premiered on PBS *American Masters* in December. In addition, we heard several privately recorded - and never previously broadcast - Christmas programs made by Bing for the Shriner's Children's Hospital. Rare Crosby interviews, including one with Lucille Ball, the annual Christmas Sing with Bing programs featuring guests like Rosemary Clooney, Johnny Mercer and Maurice Chevalier, as well as little known gems like Bing's Christmas 1949 guest appearance on *The Monica Whelan Show,* a local Los Angeles radio program, made the channel a very pleasant accompaniment to our activities in the run-up to Christmas and the New Year.

On December 11, SiriusXM 40s on 4 broadcast a 45-minute feature ***Harry Crosby: Bing Crosby Rediscovered***. He started off with a brief chat about his own background in which he said that he initially focused on music thinking that would be his career. However he later went into business and now has a private equity firm. Harry then introduced various tracks from the *Bing Crosby Rediscovered* CD and the PBS show was of course heavily plugged throughout. Harry spoke very warmly about his father and also highlighted the work of Robert Bader describing him as "the best archivist we've seen." A few days later, Harry popped up again on the SiriusXM Holiday Traditions channel with a 30-minute program playing his father's Christmas songs. This was very agreeable listening indeed with nice links from Harry.

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series *Nostalgia Radio Time* on 1420 AM WJUB has now entered its 4th year. It's on for an hour each Saturday starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET) and it always has a "Bing Sings" segment. On December 20, *Nostalgia Radio Time* was devoted to Greg's 13th annual Bing Crosby Christmas Special. This was an hour of Christmas treasures and rarities from the voice of Christmas himself. Among the rare items heard were the one-chorus version of "White Christmas" from 1976 and an extract from an interview Bing did with Pete Murray on BBC radio on September 15, 1977 when he discussed working with David Bowie.

You can tune in online at the www.1420thebreeze.com or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to the website and clicking on the 'audio archives'

link.

Also in December, Greg was the guest for the 10th straight year on Ronnie Paul's *Flying Home* TV show over http://www.cocolatv.com/ in Fresno, CA to talk about Der Bingle at Christmastime.

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is now being broadcast on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota, and it can be picked up internationally at http://jazz88.mpls.k12.mn.us/. As usual, we can give an example: Arne's January 25th broadcast was titled *Bing Sings: "Jimmy Van Heusen Songs"* and the songs played were:

> Ain't Got a Dime to My Name - The Second Time Around - My Heart Is a Hobo - Life Is So Peculiar (with The Andrews Sisters) - Man on Fire – Swinging on a Star PLUS
>
> Birds of a Feather - When Day Is Done - Brother Bill - (with Louis Armstrong) - That's What Life Is All About - You Are Too Beautiful - Would You Like to Take a Walk - (with Rosemary Clooney) - Two Cigarettes In The Dark - Without A Word Of Warning (1951) - Buckin' The Wind

ICC member **Jack Boyle** is presenting a new 30 minute monthly radio show, *BING for the SEASONS,* on the first Sunday of each month at 7 pm (Eastern) on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM, which can be found at www.hvpr.org. Bud Williamson, the president of Neversink Media Group LLC, invited Jack to do the show, and as an enthusiastic Bing fan and ICC member, he was thrilled to have the opportunity.

KEZW and the Glenn Miller Archive at the University of Colorado continue to present the ***Star Spangled Radio Hour*** every Saturday night at 6pm. Hosts Rick Crandall and Dennis Spragg introduce rare live big band radio broadcasts from the 30s and 40s each week. During the last four months, we have heard Bing in excellent quality in:

GI Journal #52 Jul. 14, 1944 (broadcast Oct. 25)
Kraft Music Hall Nov. 30, 1944 (Nov 29).
Kraft Music Hall Dec. 21, 1944 (Dec 20)

Our member **Lorne Harasen** broadcast his usual Crosby Christmas special over 91.3 CJTR in Regina, Saskatchewan on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. When working for CKCK Radio, Lorne included interviews with Bing for his Christmas show. Beginning in 1967, these interviews were part of Harasen's Christmas shows for the next seven years. Since Bing's death on Oct. 14, 1977, Lorne has maintained contact with Kathryn Crosby and she invited him to moderate panels at Bing's Alma Mater, Gonzaga University, in 2003 during the event marking the 100th anniversary of Bing's birth. This year's 30-minute Christmas special featured an interview with Kathryn, along with some Crosby favourites and finishing with "Silent Night".

Rich Conaty's long-running ***"The Big Broadcast"*** shows from New York on WFUV continue to please. Rich puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s which of course includes Bing. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet.

TV highlights - UK

Films and other items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Bilko Presents Bing Crosby	Forces TV
Happy Holidays with Bing and Frank	BBC4
Holiday Inn	Sky Christmas
Let's Make Love	Sky DramaRom
Road to Bali	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	BBC4
Son of Paleface	TCM
The Country Girl	Sky Greats
The Greatest Show on Earth	Film4
White Christmas	Channel4
White Christmas	Film4

It was a surprise to see the Phil Silvers (Bilko) show appearing on a channel which was certainly new to me. Members will of course recall that Bing's appearance came about by chance when he and Phil Silvers guested on the Ed Sullivan show on November 11, 1956. It was a no-cash, spur-of-the-moment arrangement that began at the rehearsals for the Sullivan show. Nat Hiken, producer of the Silvers show was there to do some writing on the routine Bing and Phil Silvers did together, and when Bing complimented him on the Silvers stanza, Hiken asked him if he would like to appear on the Bilko show. Bing was due to leave for Augusta, Ga., on November 14, so shooting was arranged for November 13. A five-minute slot was filmed even though the remainder of the story had not been written at that point. It seems that Nat Hiken had an idea for using Bing, and worked out the five-minute climax for immediate shooting. The rest of the script was written around the already-completed footage with the story involving the conniving Sergeant Bilko selling many tickets for an appearance by Bing even when he knew he would not be appearing. The pay-off was that Bing did actually turn up but only to recite a few lines of "The Wreck of the Hesperus" much to the Bilko character's disappointment.

Another very welcome appearance was the Sinatra Christmas show from 1957 with Bing as guest. It was great to hear these musical giants joining together on many Christmas favourites and funny to hear Bulova and Chesterfield being advertised on BBC-TV! The show remained "On Demand" for download from BBC4 for some weeks.

Sky Arts2 ran "The Legendary Bing Crosby" programme again in December and January. They also repeated *Discovering Film*: *Bing Crosby* (which we mentioned in our last issue) at least six times.

Another BBC4 programme was:

Sound of Song – the invention that turned Bing Crosby into the devil

The first episode of this very interesting three-part series history of recorded song unearthed some nuggets from the past, including the belief that the microphone did something wicked to crooners' voices. Presented by Neil Brand, we were shown how songs came to be recorded on tin foil, wax cylinders and then records. Then the microphone was invented, and Brand described how that led in turn to a new way of singing, called crooning. It was soft and low and very sensuous. Absolutely disgusting, some said. Bing Crosby was basically the devil. Brand indicated that Bing was not the "old guy in a cardigan" he grew up with but something quite different and cool. We were shown a clip of Bing singing "Auf Wiedersehen, My Dear" from the Sennett short and Brand enthusiastically described his singing as "peerless". Gary Giddins was on hand to outline how the early crooners were branded as degenerate and that Bing was even blamed for breaking up marriages!

Episode 2 titled "Reeling and Rocking" covered the evolution of magnetic tape and Jack Mullin's discovery of the German technology was highlighted as was Bing's important role in using and financing it. While this was being discussed extracts from Bing's recordings of "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe", "Play a Simple Melody" and "Dear Hearts and Gentle People" were heard in the background. Mr. Brand went on to look at the work of Sam Phillips in the Sun Records studio in Memphis and the important contributions of Leiber & Stoller, Phil Spector and Brian Wilson to the genre.

UK radio

The National Presenters on BBC Radio2

There was a seasonal boost on BBC Radio2 in December with songs such as "Peace on Earth / The Little Drummer Boy" being used on **Steve Wright's Sunday Love Songs** and "It's Beginning to Look A Lot like Christmas" on **Anneka Rice's** Saturday Breakfast Show. Other than that however Bing seems to be heard being less than less.

Desmond Carrington's Friday night show includes Bing when he can and in the last 4 months, Mr. Crosby has been heard singing "Memories", "I Don't Know Why" (with Lauren Bacall), "Softly As in a Morning sunrise" and "Buffalo Gals" (with Rosemary Clooney).

Don Black returned to Sunday nights in December and as usual he played a few Bings including "Road to Morocco" and "I Love to Dance Like They Used to Dance".

Clare Teal's show on Sunday remembered our man now and again with "Little Jack Frost Get Lost" (with Peggy Lee) "Looks Like a Cold Cold Winter", "Hindustan (with Rosemary Clooney) and "Fancy Meeting You Here" (also with Rosie).

Elaine Paige on her Sunday afternoon plays the groaner now and again but we can usually rely on her occasional deputy, Barbara Windsor, to remember the Bing and she selected "Little One" on one occasion. Elaine used "Jingle Bells" on the Sunday before Christmas but other than that she has neglected Mr. Crosby.

Michael Ball (also on Sunday evenings) used Bing once ("How About You" with Rosie) and **Liza Tarbuck** (Saturday evenings) played Bing and Bob's "If I Knew You Were Coming" in January. Better than nothing I suppose.

BBC Radio4 does not play much music but Bing cropped up on December 6 in the *Saturday Live* programme. Richard Baker happened to be listening and he heard choreographer Matthew Bourne discussing his autograph collecting activities in the 1970s. Matthew had been told that Bing was staying at Claridges so he hurried along to the hotel only to be told that Bing had left to play golf in Kent, Matthew waited 6 hours until Bing returned in order to get his autograph! That's dedication.

Another Radio4 programme is *Last Word* which is a weekly look at recent obituaries and Bing cropped up in it on December 12. ICC member John Popey was listening and heard the career of the late Ian Fraser being discussed This finished with a reference to Mr. Fraser being the last person to conduct Bing singing "White Christmas" whereupon that last rendition from 1977 was played.

The local radio presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) was again our star on her Saturday night shows (10pm-midnight). In the four months to the end of February, Anne played a total of 40 tracks by the master! Songs heard varied from "The Horse Told Me" to "Maybe I'm Wrong Again" and on to "Keep It a Secret". She really surpassed herself in December as Bert Bishop reported in his email to me.

If you hadn't already listened/or heard, Anne Hopper played six Bing tracks on her pre-Christmas broadcast of the 20th. December, including your Secret of Christmas request which, she thought was a very nice number that she's not heard before.
The tracks were:
O, Holy Night [my request Bert]
Candlelight & Wine [Trevor Wagstaff's request]
Snow [included in the four-of-a kind by a listener]
White Christmas [her choice of the 1942 recording. The best one!]
The Secret of Christmas [your choice]
A Time to Be Jolly [Arthur Blood's request]
On the 27th. December programme she quoted Bing as being the 'most requested male voice' of 2014,

and played C'est Si Bon. Rosemary Clooney tied with Doris Day for the most requested female voice.

She continues to welcome requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk* so email her if you want to hear lots of Bing on the radio. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 7 days after the initial broadcast.

In our last issue, I pleaded with members to email presenters asking them to play a Bing request and I did this myself by firing off missives to several local radio stations. Richard Baker was one who joined me in writing to BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** whose programme of big band swing and balladeers goes out each Sunday afternoon. Howard duly played "Autumn Leaves" for Richard and me plus "A Fella with an Umbrella" for Stan White. Richard had written a thoughtful letter suggesting that some of Bing's later recordings should receive more attention and this was read out on air. This led Mr. Leader to play "Down Among the Sheltering Palms" from 1957. We were still not done with this Crosby segment and we then heard "Baby Why Don't You Please Come Home" which had been included in an Eddie Heywood CD Stan White had just sent to Howard.

The following week Howard mentioned that it might be nice to get me on the air to talk about the ICC and I duly made contact. We recorded a 15 minute chat by phone which was broadcast on November 16. I gave information about the new documentary, the new DVDs and CDs. He wanted to know all about the ICC and I promoted us heavily. Howard topped and tailed the item by playing Bing singing "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Feels Good, Feels Right". As you will have read in our *Letters* section a number of our members tuned in to the broadcast. Howard has done us proud in the 4-month period under review by playing 15 Harry Lillis tracks including several more from the 1957 album "Bing with a Beat".

Wherever you are in the world, please email Howard with a Crosby request at *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.* There is a "Listen Again" option.

Harmony Night is hosted by Bill Rennells on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet. It's a three-hour broadcast starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings and he too has a "Listen Again" option. Plenty of Crosby played and I had to smile when someone requested Bing singing "I Can't Begin to Tell You" and by mistake Bill played the Michael Holliday version and didn't appear to notice! I calculate that Bill played 21 Bing requests in the 4-months and six of these were submitted by the ubiquitous Stan White. Ian Lawrence and Trevor Wagstaff got a few in too.

Again, why not email Bill with your Bing requests to *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk.* He loves to hear from Crosby fans overseas.

The Late Paul Barnes is the apt title for the two-hour show hosted by Paul Barnes over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights. As previously mentioned, Paul has been using the 2013 Crosby calendar as a prompt for a Bing session each month and in November, he played "Mr. Meadowlark" and "Pennies from Heaven" (V-disc version).

In a separate tribute to Eddie Lang, we heard "Some of These Days" and "Love Me Tonight". During December, Barnsy excelled himself by playing the *Holiday Inn* medley from the Kraft Music Hall of December 14, 1944 and included the adverts too. The January and February calendar songs were suitably noted and in February Paul added in "Personality" which is obviously one of his favourites as he has played it many times.

Beverley Humphreys with her *Beverley's World of Music* show on BBC Radio Wales on Sundays at 9 p.m. plays Bing quite frequently and we heard at least nine songs by El Bingo during the 4-month period. Tracks such as "It's Been a Long, Long Time", "Zing a Little Zong" and "Love Walked In" were amongst those heard. Beverley also has a **"Listen again" facility.**

Michael Crampton has become aware of a community radio station in Bradford *bcb.106.6 fm* which can also be heard at www.bcbradio.co.uk. One of their presenters – **Carl Gresham** – has delivered several tributes to Bing and Michael has supplied copies of BING magazine to him. You can hear Carl on Sundays 11-12 a.m. and Mondays 1-2 p.m.

Another community radio station serving the 21 towns and villages of Tandridge, Surrey is Ridge Radio (www.ridgeradio.co.uk). On December 13, **Russ Evans** put on a three-hour show telling the story of Bing's career. Russ played many of Bing's Christmas songs and his top hits.

Many local radio stations have weekend programmes which play our kind of music and **John Bennett's Sunday Club** (BBC Radio Foyle in Northern Ireland) is well worth a listen. John has used Crosby songs like "Pennies from Heaven", "Now is the Hour" and "It's Been a Long Long Time" in recent months.

Gerald Jackson (BBC Radio Manchester) and **Mike Carey** (BBC Radio Derby) are others that feature Bing now and again. There are undoubtedly more but I do not have details.

May I again highlight **Jim Reilly's** hour-long Bing show which continues on Angel Radio (www.angelradio.co.uk) on Tuesday nights at 10:30 p.m. UK time. Also the station broadcasts a Bing radio show on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m.

Australia

High Society was shown again on the GEM channel on January 4.

John Funnell's "I've Heard That Song Before" from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Wednesday on WNY FM 88.9 includes Bing every week and the show can now be heard online at www.wynfm.org.au/.

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week. This is presented by Bob Horsfall.

Other radio programmes featuring our man are Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 (Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.) Loris Young's show on 3WBC FM 94.1 (Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) has plenty of Crosby too.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Ian Fraser, the Emmy-winning music conductor, arranger and composer, who worked extensively with Julie Andrews and oversaw the famed Bing Crosby/David Bowie holiday duet, died at home in Los Angeles on October 31. He was 81.

Ian Fraser was born Aug. 23, 1933, in Hove on the south coast of England. After graduating from Eastbourne College, he worked for Decca Records in the U.K. as a vocal arranger. Among the many projects with which he was involved as an orchestrator in his home country was the hit musical "Stop the World — I Want to Get Off" by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse, which opened in London in 1961 and on Broadway in 1962. Fraser went to Los Angeles in the early 1960s, working in television and conducting nightclub and other live performances. Over the years he conducted on Oscar, Emmy and Tony telecasts, AFI specials and the annual "Christmas in Washington" shows. The stars of programs he worked on included Andy Williams, Bob Hope, Carol Burnett, Michael Crawford, Ann-Margret, Mikhail Baryshnikov and the Muppets. His closest collaboration was with Julie Andrews, beginning in the early 1970s. He arranged and conducted for her recordings, TV shows, live performances and the Broadway musical version of "Victor/Victoria" that opened in 1995.

Fraser was the arranger and conductor on numerous television shows during the golden age of musical specials in the 1960s and '70s, winning the first of his 11 Emmys for the 1976 "America Salutes Richard Rodgers" show that aired on CBS. He first worked with Bing as music director on the "Merry Christmas Fred, from the Crosby's" show in 1975 and again on the "Bell Telephone Jubilee" in March 1976. As we know, the somewhat unlikely Crosby/Bowie duet was performed on the 1977 "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas" program on which Fraser was the music director and Bowie a guest star. The plan was to have Bing and the British rocker team up to sing the old chestnut "Little Drummer Boy" but at the last minute, Bowie objected.

"David walked in and said, 'God, I hate that song. Isn't there something else I could do?'" Fraser said in a 2010 interview on the ABC News show "Nightline."

David Bowie rehearses with Bing.

It was too late to come up with a whole new song for the sequence, so Fraser collaborated with fellow composer Larry Grossman and writer Buz Kohan to quickly write a counterpoint song — "Peace on Earth" — for Bowie to sing during the duet. After Bing's death, the duet has lived on as a holiday favorite in the U.S. and U.K., even in a 2010 parody version by Will Ferrell and John Riley for the website *Funny or Die* that ends with them swearing at each other.

Rod McKuen, the singer-songwriter, musician and poet died on January 29 at the age of 81. He was one of the best-selling poets in the United States during the late 1960s. Throughout his career, McKuen produced a wide range of recordings, which included popular music, spoken word poetry, film soundtracks and classical music. He earned two Academy Award nominations and one Pulitzer nomination for his music compositions. McKuen's translations and adaptations of the songs of Jacques Brel were instrumental in bringing the Belgian songwriter to prominence in the English-speaking world with "If You Go Away" probably being the best known. McKuen was born on April 29, 1933, in Oakland California. Raised by his mother and stepfather, who was a violent alcoholic, McKuen ran away from home at the age of 11. He drifted along the West Coast, supporting himself as a ranch hand, surveyor, railroad worker, lumberjack, rodeo cowboy, stuntman, and radio disk jockey, always sending money home to his mother. On his website, www.rodmckuen.com, McKuen wrote about his past and answered fan questions. In 2009, he wrote, "I first met Bing Crosby in Elko, Nevada, when I was a kid. I was incarcerated at The Nevada School of Industry as a chronic runaway and truant. Some of us in this 'reform school' were assigned to work details on nearby ranches for a dollar a day in commissary money. One I did chores on several times was Crosby's: I was about 12 at the time, and nearly three decades later I was reunited with Bing in San Francisco." Bing particularly

liked McKuen's song "Love's Been Good to Me" which he sang several times.

Gary Lane, who played bass in The Standells pop group died on Nov. 5 after an 18-month battle with lung cancer. He was 76. The Standells had several hits in the 1960s, the most well-known of which is "Dirty Water" which reached the No. 11 spot in the Billboard Hot 100 in 1966. The link with Bing comes from their appearance on an episode of Bing's sitcom series when The Standells played the part of the fictional rock group the "Love Bugs" in "Bugged by the Love Bugs" which was shown on January 18, 1965. Bing sang "Kansas City" with them. They also appeared as themselves on the television sitcom *The Munsters* in the episode "Far Out Munster," wherein the band performed "Come On and Ringo" and a version of The Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand".

Joe Franklin, the American radio and television host personality died on January 24. He was 88. Martin McQuade has penned a special tribute.

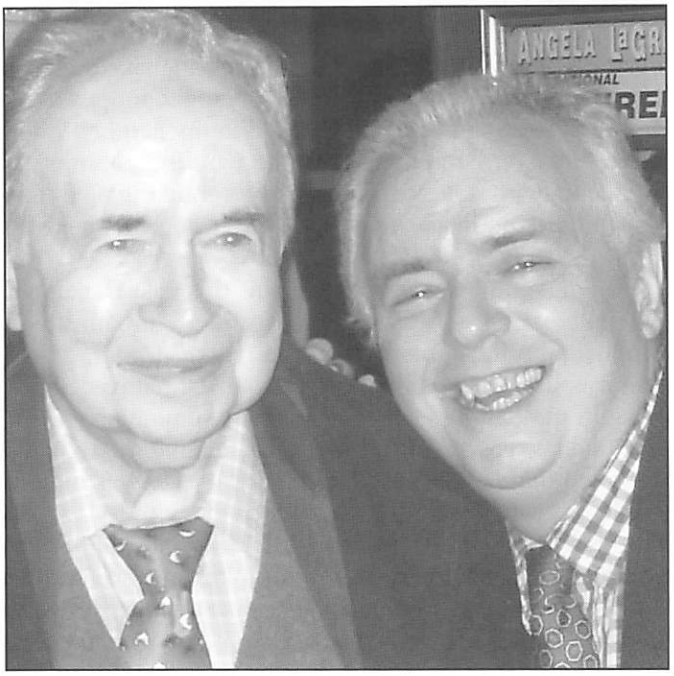
Give My Regards to Broadway Joe

It was in the wee small hours of the morning that his authentic and cherished voice truly cast its spell, forever luring us down the endless twists and turns of *Memory Lane*. The elongated enunciation, the crisp questions and the show biz drenched quips all contributed to a deliciously Runyonesque intoxication. His hallmark was nostalgia, a word which he might as well have invented. Personally speaking, Joe was seminal, providing a childhood glimpse into the hallowed world of entertainment which has enthralled me ever since. Indeed he was directly responsible for my first exposure to classic Crosby. My father, a projectionist, knew exactly what to get me for Christmas after hearing Joe promote Columbia's 1967 release, "Bing Crosby in Hollywood." My life forever changed.

Joe was always fully contained within a radio or television, yet when my eyes first caught sight of him in person, he was no mystery, but entirely accessible, indeed a kindred spirit. It was the night of December 7th, 1976 and Joe was one million percent alive. He was at Bing Crosby's opening night on Broadway at The Uris Theater and he could not stay put. Clad in an audacious plaid blazer, Joe paraded up and down the aisles, hail fellow well met, all burnished to a shine within the excitement of the vast auditorium. Just a few nights prior Joe had the coup of his career when his idol appeared on his TV show and he was still coasting off that triumph. Just before the introductory strains of "Where the Blue of the Night," Joe settled into his seat in the tenth row, right next to Bing's *Going My Way* co-star Rise Stevens - and directly in front of me. His impish glee is unforgettable.

During the intermission, I haltingly approached Joe and attempted to remind him that we met several years before when he hosted a special 70 mm screening of *The Jolson Story* at The Ziegfeld Theater. He said he recalled the moment but he couldn't have. The feigned sincerity didn't matter. Joe was beguiling. In later years there would be no hesitation to visit his office where gravity defying towers of entertainment memorabilia threatened to engulf him. He always greeted me with that trademark lopsided grin. "How are you doing, me boy?" Without fail, the conversation would lapse into all things Bing.

Joe first asked me to appear on his TV show in 1985 in order to promote my singing engagements. Was I nervous? Perhaps a bit, but this subsided once ensconced on that mythical panel alongside his "throne." Many invitations would follow, notably on two successive shows with Irving Caesar and Joe Bushkin. In 1987, Joe first asked me to be an occasional guest on his weekly Saturday night pop music radio marathon. For the next twenty years, as Bing's birthday and death anniversary neared, we would chat in the WOR studio about "our crooner" in between spins of records from my collection. My intention was always to survey Bing's discography by choosing a song from each phase of his expansive career. Joe agreed with this approach. *In every decade there was a Bing Crosby tone, a different timbre, a different delivery. It's amazing! This man, in six decades, had six different voices.*



Joe (left) and Martin on one of their many occasions together

On several occasions we would recall the emotional radio tribute which Joe paid to Bing throughout the early Sunday morning after Bing died in 1977. Joe could barely contain his sense of loss as he would recall that long-ago vigil, which was highlighted throughout by selections from Bing's *Musical Autobiography.* Joe's expression would turn wistful as our conversation invariably switched to his TV hour with Bing. Out of 300,000 guests, one was set apart, as Joe once explained to me.

I always worshiped or admired Bing Crosby. I can't find the words. I always thought of Bing mechanically reproduced. I thought of Bing being on records or radio or TV or the movie screen, but when he walked toward me flesh and blood live and in person it was the first time

in my life I just melted. Do you know that feeling when you melt? And I had everybody. I had Cary Grant, I had Charlie Chaplin, but nobody ever gave me that tingle that I got from Bing Crosby. Arthur Tracy, "The Street Singer" was on with him, and Steve Mason, the kid who sang Crosby songs. Bing held up Steve Mason's album and read off the twelve titles and sang bits and pieces. I got to tell you a little secret. I wanted Bing so badly I used my devices. I had Mrs. Crosby on three times! I got her to like me. I said, "If you like me, get me your husband." It worked. She delivered him. You can tell that he enjoyed that show with me. He wasn't Bing Crosby that night. That night he could have been a third rate, broken down singer. He had his wife sitting with him and he was happy and beaming. After the show, there were some people outside the studio and he asked them to go on tour with him. It's my all time favorite of my shows.

As the new century began Joe curtailed his broadcast routine but remained current with a weekly program on The Bloomberg Radio Network. An outstanding episode consisted of his interview with Kathryn and Mary Frances to coincide with the 30th anniversary of Bing's death. My report appeared in the winter 2007 issue of *BING*. In 2013 Joe called upon me to discuss Bing's business accomplishments, as reviewed in that summer's issue. Joe also continued to make personal appearances, regularly hosting a talent show held in my neighborhood of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn where he would enrapture the audience with tales of the many luminaries he had known. His enthusiasm would perk when he spoke of Bing.

My last time spent with Joe was this past December when we sat together at a cabaret in midtown Manhattan's Restaurant Row, *Don't Tell Mama*, to see our friend Bronwyn Rucker's annual Christmas Show. He told me that he had just received the winter issue of *Bing* and was looking forward to reading it. He also confided that he had just suffered a fall. He was plainly tired. Yet when he was summoned onto the stage all fatigue was shed. "Broadway Joe" was on, totally and completely in his element, telling jokes all too familiar but still oh so funny due to his mischievous delivery. Like his beloved Bing, Joe was a trouper to the very end. One month later came news that he was gone. Can this be? Impossible. No one in media history, with the possible exception of his hero, inhabited the airwaves as much as Joe. Day in and day out he beckoned and guided us down an ethereal *Memory Lane*. He remains an abiding presence on that never ending thoroughfare. Thank you, Joe, and God bless.

Martin McQuade

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord recalls his first meeting with Bing.

It was 70 years ago during the summer of 1945 that I first met Bing. When, as a young Canadian soldier, I was on an extended leave in California. We were friends and colleagues for over 32 remarkable and memorable years.

When I arrived 'that Sunday, that summer' in 1945 at the Los Angeles bus terminal I was delighted to read that Bing was in town. He was appearing before the Paramount cameras in an Irving Berlin musical called *Blue Skies*. An enthusiastic teenage fan, I was determined to somehow see Bing in person. I soon had that opportunity when I volunteered to be one of a group of servicemen who would be responsible for crowd control at a celebrity fund-raising golf tournament for the Hollywood Guild Canteen. I was mesmerized following the Crosby foursome and watching the effortless play of Bing. I soon forgot my responsibilities and for more of the match became part of the crowd. I managed to get Bing's autograph and took a few candid photographs of him in action.

Later that week I attended an armed forces radio show called *G.I. Journal* with Bing as the mythical paper's editor and Claudette Colbert as his secretary. The amusing plot had Bing looking for an office boy and a lean young man named Frank Sinatra applying for the job.

Claudette Colbert and Bing are closely watched by Frank Sinatra. Mel Blanc can be seen on the left.

Bing Crosby Enterprises was located on Sunset Blvd. near Beverly Hills. On a typical sunny California day I hitched a ride out to the Crosby Building. It was a three-story structure where Bing's varied business interests were managed.

As I arrived I saw an elderly man standing by the front door. I approached him and asked him politely if he knew if pictures of Bing might be available at the reception desk. He assured me that they were and invited me to come inside the building where staff members addressed him as "Mr. Crosby". We took the elevator to the third floor and he escorted me to Bing's office where he handed me an autographed photo from Bing's desk.

I was flabbergasted at that moment and blurted out, "Are you Bing's father?"

He proudly told me that he was and I immediately asked him for his autograph. He smiled and said, "Why would you want my autograph, I'm nobody." To which I replied with fan fervor, "Yes you are – you're Bing's dad!" A very pleasant man, he signed my autograph

book, "To Gordon, Sincerely your friend Harry L. Crosby Sr."

Years later Bing told me that he always left autographed photos on his desk for fans that might drop by. He also told me that he called his father "Hollywood Harry". It seems his dad was always promoting his movies and records and would show any passer-by the latest clippings about his famous son.

My persistent efforts to gain entrance to Paramount Pictures paid off when I first entered the gates of the studio with a group of servicemen. We were escorted to the sets of films in production, including an Alan Ladd adventure drama set in Calcutta, and met the very popular star of the 1940s. While touring from one sound stage to the next film set, Bing came out of a studio door and walked toward our group. He was wearing a chef's hat for a scene in *Blue Skies*, humming a melody and snapping his fingers. He immediately put us at ease with a few jokes about his pal, Bob Hope. He asked me where I was from, and when I replied "Toronto," he said with a grin, "You had Hope up that way recently, didn`t you. Pretty dull time, huh."

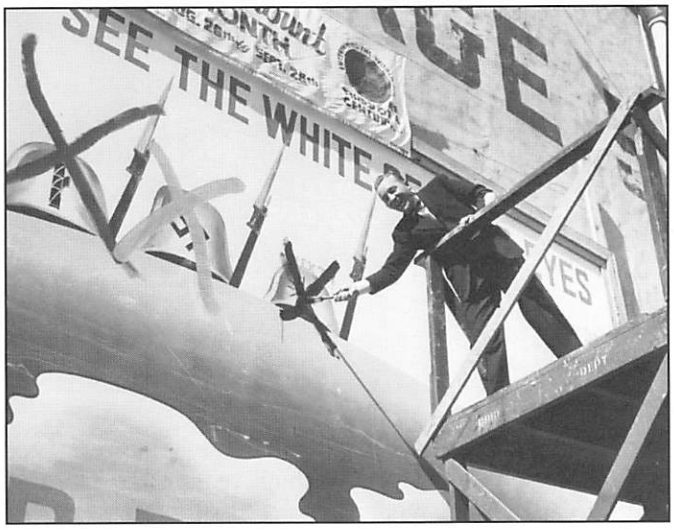
A week later, Aug. 14th, I was feeling rather depressed when I realized I had lost my autograph book containing personal greetings from several of the top stars of Hollywood's halcyon days. While I was standing outside the servicemen's hostel where I was staying, a long white convertible pulled up and the driver asked me if I wanted a lift. He was a kindly older man, who seemed to sense my dismay. When I told him of the loss of the autograph book, he tried to put my mind at ease by telling me that he was one of the makeup men at Paramount.

We drove through the fabled gates of Paramount, waving to the guard on duty, and parked near the studio commissary. I could hardly believe my good fortune. My considerate host took me to lunch, where I recognized cafeteria customers who were reigning stars of the era, including Robert Cummings and Barbara Stanwyck. Supporting players and extras, wearing a variety of costumes and in makeup, were seated throughout the room or were in the self-serve line-up.

Following lunch my new-found friend escorted me to the Crosby dressing room. Bing was standing outside the door talking to a rising young singer/actress, Olga San Juan, who had a feature role in *Blue Skies*. When they had finished their conversation, Bing walked toward us, and surprised me by telling me that he remembered meeting me from the week before. At that point the makeup man began to tell him about the loss of my autograph book. Then there was an amusing exchange as Bing said to me, "You were wearing a different uniform," and in my confusion I referred back to the autograph book and said, "I lost it." With tongue-in-cheek he replied, "What, the uniform," and I stammered, "No the autograph book" – and we both laughed.

The make-up man had to leave us for a few minutes and Bing invited me into his dressing room. Trying to make intelligent conversation, I asked him about his recording plans and future films. As he lit his pipe, I thought about the many times I had seen that ritual in Crosby movies. Overwhelmed at being in the presence of my boyhood idol, I blurted out, "Gosh! The folks back home will never believe this!" In his mellow baritone voice he replied, "Sure they will." Sensing my awe he then asked me if I was free for the rest of the day, and if so, would I like to watch some of the scenes being shot for *Blue Skies*. Upon my reply that I was free and would be honored to be his guest, he suggested that he would have a photo of the two of us taken later that day. He then excused himself to study some of his lines, and I was taken by the makeup man to the main studio where I watched Billy de Wolfe and another rising actress, Joan Caulfield, film scenes for the picture.

By mid-afternoon radio news reports could be heard all over the lot, and it was obvious that the war in the Pacific was about to end. While it had been evident for some time that universal peace was only days away, when the end came at approximately 4:00 PM, Pacific Coast Time, August 14, pent-up emotions burst like a tidal wave over Los Angeles.

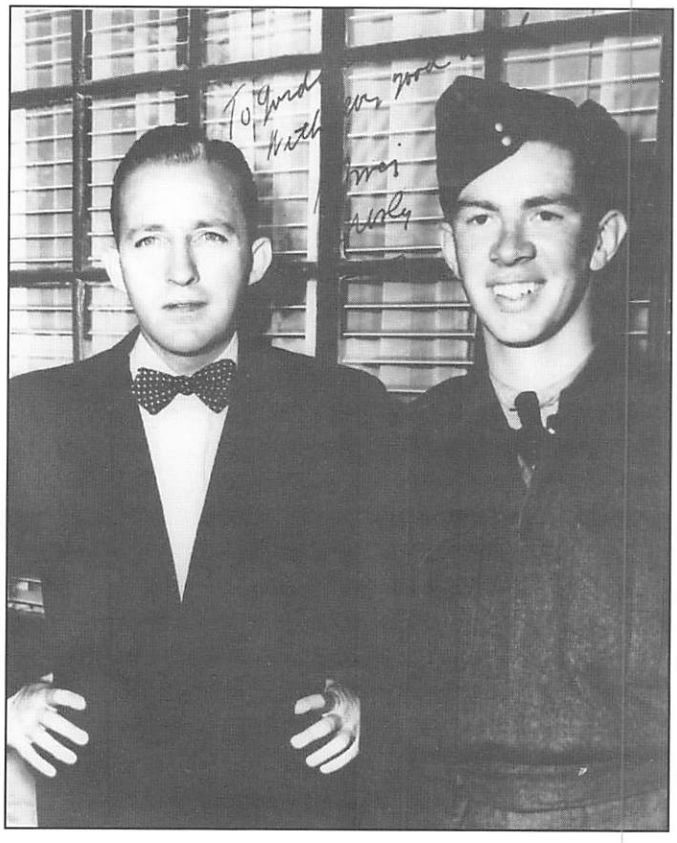


It seemed that everyone at Paramount headed for the studio square, site of a war bond billboard with large images of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. A big letter "X" had been painted over the first two caricatures. Suddenly voices began calling for Bing, which eventually broke into a chorus of "Crosby, Crosby, Crosby!" A few moments later Bing appeared, carrying a bucket of black paint and a brush. While all this was happening I had been carrying on a conversation with a friendly fellow standing beside me. Only when my companion made a comment about the height of the sign and Bing`s dexterity, did I realize that I had been having a spirited conversation with Alan Ladd!

With two sweeps of his brush Bing placed an "X" over the effigy of Tojo, and the crowd let out with a loud cheer – and took off in every direction to celebrate. Despite my own joy that the war was over, I was very concerned that in the excitement Bing would forget the photo. I waited for him outside his dressing room. I soon became dejected, however, when the studio lot appeared to be abandoned. Just as I was about to leave, convinced that I had missed the opportunity for a rare photo with Bing, he arrived around the corner with a photographer. "I had a difficult time finding one of these fellas, so we`ll have to take it right away," Bing said.

Across the street from his dressing room there was a

backdrop for the wartime action film *Calcutta*. Bing looked across at the rubble from a battle scene, gave me a nudge in the ribs, and just as the cameraman clicked his shutter, he quipped, "I see they're finally getting a new dressing room for Hope."



Shortly after my return home the picture arrived with a personal autograph, which read: "To Gordon, with every good wish, Bing Crosby." It was the beginning of our friendship – a friendship that gave me the privilege of producing and hosting the radio anthology of his life and times, *The Crosby Years*.

Gord Atkinson

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what was happening in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

In January 1915, Harry Crosby (aged 11) was in the seventh grade at Webster Grade School in East Sharp Avenue, Spokane.

75 YEARS AGO

January 1940 saw Bing Crosby (aged 36) maintaining a busy social life with Dixie including their going to the races and to the fights together. On January 13, they held a celebration gala dinner party at the Cafe LaMaze after their horse "Don Mike" won the $10,000 San Pasqual Handicap at Santa Anita. In March, they took part in another meeting of the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club. Others taking part in the entertainment were Andy Devine, Bob Hope, Pat O'Brien, Perry Botkin, Johnny Mercer, John Scott Trotter, Harry Warren, Hoagy Carmichael, Jerry Colonna and Ken Murray.

Over the next three months, Bing continued with his weekly *Kraft Music Hall* broadcasts having guests such as Humphrey Bogart, Maureen O'Hara, Ida Lupino, Sabu, Walt Disney, Marlene Dietrich, Errol Flynn, Randolph Scott, Gloria Jean and Pat O'Brien. Some of the reviews seen included:

Sabu, the young elephant driver from India who has appeared in several pictures also guested on the program, giving the answers in a lively interview about elephant driving as compared to horseback riding, his headband as compared to a hat etc. Like the Viroval appearance it was skillfully scripted to highlight the youngster and incidentally, continue the flavor that makes the Crosby series one of the week's standouts.
(*Variety*, February 28, 1940)

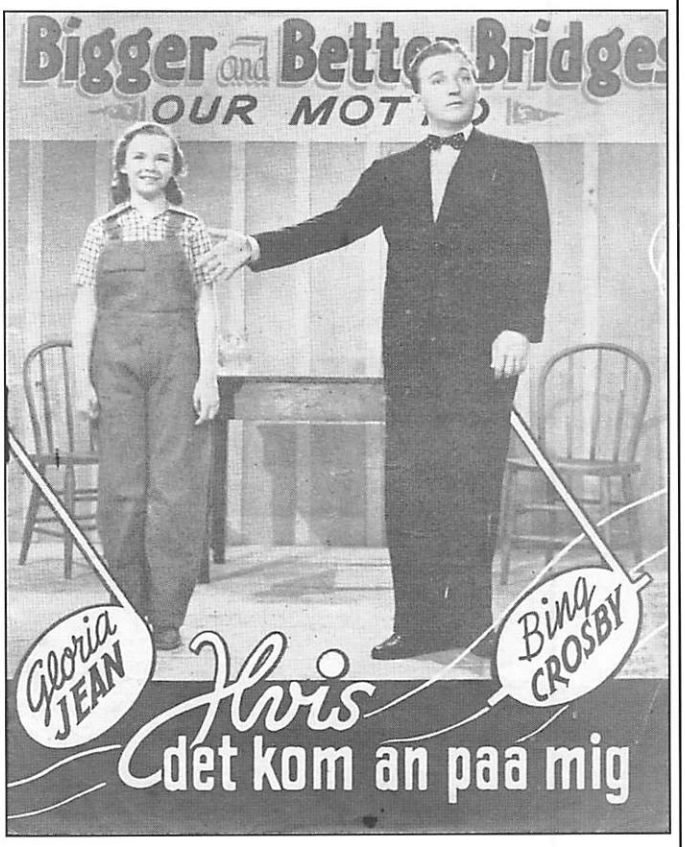
> Bing Crosby's Music Hall show was better than it has been for weeks. Bob Burns got off a nifty when he said: "Parents have a great influence on their children. When Bing's youngest was born, he looked up and apologized for coming in fourth."
> (Sidney Skolsky, *Hollywood Citizen News*, March 9, 1940)

During January, Bing found time to participate in several other radio broadcasts. He used a linkup from Hollywood so that he could contribute the song "South of the Border" and dialogue to *Caravan* - a Bob Crosby NBC radio show - in New York starring Mildred Bailey. Then he was in a radio version of *Sing You Sinners* for Lux Radio Theater on CBS with Ralph Bellamy and Elizabeth Patterson and following this he took part in "The March of Dimes" program. This was radio's contribution to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis campaign.

Bing was a regular member of the Lakeside golfing team playing matches against other local clubs. His fourth pro–am golf tournament took place at Rancho Santa Fe at the end of January and while this was underway, he filmed *Swing with Bing*, a two-reel golfing item featuring the tournament. The professional winner was Ed (Porky) Oliver with a 36-hole card of 68-67—135. It netted him $500 first money. A record field of nearly 350 pros and amateurs competed, the weather was ideal, and the gallery exceeded any previous tourney. Immediately after this, Bing was in St. Vincent's Hospital, Hollywood, for observation regarding a possible appendectomy. No operation was performed and he left the hospital on February 1st and went to Santa Anita to look over the horses. Within days, he had formed the Crosby Research Foundation, Inc. This was set up by Bing and his brother Larry at 170 East California Street in Pasadena to test, develop, and market inventions. It became a clearing house for inventors.

In February, filming commenced of *If I Had My Way* with Gloria Jean, Charles Winninger, and El Brendel. The director was David Butler with musical direction by

Charles Previn. This was another independent production in which Bing had a financial interest and filming continued until April.



The Swedish publicity for *If I Had My Way*.

His film *Road to Singapore* was released in March and was generally well received. The reviewer for *Variety* was shrewd enough to note that Crosby and Hope could be successful as a regular team.

> Initial teaming of Bing Crosby and Bob Hope in Road to Singapore provides foundation for continuous round of good substantial comedy that will click up and down the line. Paramount should carry the team through a series of pictures as Singapore will prove a most profitable attraction in all runs, with good chances for holdovers in many key spots.
>
> Comedy is of rapid-fire order, swinging along at a zippy pace. Contrast is provided in Crosby's leisurely presentation of situations and dialog, in comparison to the lightning-like thrusts and parries of Hope. Neat blending of the two brands accentuates the comedy values for laugh purposes.
>
> ...Sprinkled liberally throughout the running, and deftly spotted, are four songs and a choral theme number. 'Too Romantic' (Monaco - Burke) is a sentimental tune sung by Crosby and Miss Lamour that has a good chance to reach hit status.
>
> (*Variety,* February 28, 1940)

Bing's first recording session of 1940 took place on February 9 and he undertook further recording dates on February 25 and March 22. The last named session with John Scott Trotter produced four songs, including "Sierra Sue" and "Yours Is My Heart Alone". "Sierra Sue" entered the charts on July 6, spending 14 weeks there including four weeks at No. 1.

> ...He sings a new American lyric to the hardy standby of all male warblers—*You Are My Heart's Delight*. The American lyric is titled *Yours Is My Heart Alone*, and although the words sometimes fall a little oddly on the beats, Bing's rendering of it is superb. Embryo vocalists— note his phrasing; how he feels what he is singing; how his interpretation is sympathetic and moving throughout. On the other side is a quaint little ballad by Stephen (*Swanee River*) Foster. It is called *Beautiful Dreamer* and the words are sloppily Victorian, with plenty of "thee's" and "thou's" floating about. But the tune, and the way that Bing puts it over, are romantic enough to move the heart of a Hitler, and at the risk of being told that I am crazy by some of you tough readers, I announce this as my favourite recent vocal record.
>
> (*Melody Maker*, August 17, 1940)

50 YEARS AGO

Bing (aged 61) was completing the filming of his weekly sitcom series in January 1965. One episode called "Operation Man Save" had as guest stars Joan Fontaine and Dennis Day. After this, Bing filmed the episode titled "One for the Birds" with Phil Harris and they clearly had a lot of fun together.

Phil and Bing in action together

The final show to be filmed was "The Image" in which Kathryn Crosby was the guest. However the show's audiences were falling and the latest Nielsen report indicated that the show was languishing in 77th. place for evening network shows with a rating of 14.9.

> Bing Crosby, who started his first weekly television show last fall, expressed doubt yesterday that the series would continue next season.... "It's been fun and it hasn't been too hard a chore," the singer and actor said. "But according to the rating, we haven't been doing so well. I think I'd have to get on a glass

bottom boat to find the rating. It's a rat race. If you don't get a rating they dump you." Mr. Crosby said he was not depressed by the show's rating and that usually a show required "a couple of years to get a good rating."
(*New York Times*, January 13, 1965)

The director of the series, James Sheldon, wrote about the experience in his autobiography.

It was a happy time, and I kept the set happy because it wasn't necessary to "direct" Bing playing Bing. One of the things I learned as I worked with him was that he had a tendency to lose his energy as the day progressed. However, when we were working on the musical numbers in each episode, Bing was all there. That gave me the idea of having the rehearsal pianist available at all times, to play in between takes while the lighting crew got ready. The music cheered Bing, and he performed better. The atmosphere on the set was like a cocktail party. Other celebrities would drop by sometimes. Even Lucille Ball (who owned the studio [Desilu]) would come on the set to say hello and chat with us once in a while.

John Scott Trotter was an important member of the creative staff of the show and a joy to work with. He had been with Bing for years, and knew just what was workable for him. For the songs, Bing didn't want to pre-record the audio and then have to lip-synch to it when being filmed. Most musical films were done with pre-recording, but we did it live with a piano. Then John Scott would put it together on the dubbing stage, with the orchestra just hired for the session, and synch it to Bing's voice.

Bing was always on time and always very professional, but the perks of stardom were part of his deal on that series. Occasionally, we would use an extra camera to get more coverage without taxing Bing too much. Bing's contract also required us to finish with him by six o'clock every day. It was nice to be able to count on getting home at a reasonable hour. I also enjoyed having a home base instead of going to different locations or soundstages each day. I even had my own office and telephone at Desilu.

The Bing Crosby Show only lasted for one season. It was a pleasant half-hour, although not as successful as Crosby had been in the past. The ratings had not been great, but I'm told the reason the show wasn't picked up because Bing didn't want to continue. At this point in his life Bing didn't need the money, or the work. The bursitis in his shoulder caused him pain, and I think he just got bored doing the show. It was a shame, because I had a lot of fun working with Bing. (James Sheldon, writing in his book *Before I Forget - Directing Television: 1948-1988*)

During January, Bing and Kathryn entertained former President Eisenhower at their home and on January 16, Bing hosted a *Hollywood Palace Show* on ABC-TV with guests Beverly Garland, Frank McHugh, and George Burns.

The Hollywood Palace has done well for itself in the first year of its existence...The first birthday party show was emceed by Bing Crosby who also emceed its premiere on January 4th, a year ago. As guests, the producers gathered many of the emcees that had appeared during the year, for extremely brief bits. Crosby in addition to conferenciering, reparteed with Frank McHugh, Beverly Garland and the raft of guests to give this show a great big, agreeable and ingratiating effect.
(*Variety*, January 20, 1965)

Bing's Pro-Am Golf Championship at Pebble Beach took place later in January with Bruce Crampton finishing as the professional winner. Celebrities playing included Danny Thomas, Ray Milland, James Garner, Donald O'Connor, Andy Williams, Clint Eastwood and Bob Hope.

Meanwhile, Larry Crosby met FBI agents and gave them a file of over one hundred crank letters directed at Bing since 1956. The FBI compared the writing on them all to the most recent letter without achieving a match.

On February 2, 1965, Bing and Kathryn went to the Hyatt Music Theater for Rosemary Clooney's opening. They all joined the supper party after the show in the Ferrer suite at Hyatt House. February 13 saw the wedding of Lindsay Crosby and Janet Sue Schwartze (age 23 – a staff secretary at Douglas Aircraft Co. in Santa Monica) in Las Vegas.

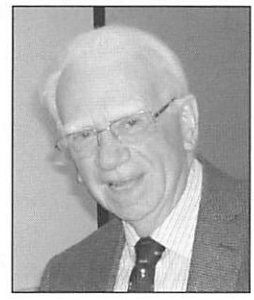
Before leaving for a spell at his home in Las Cruces, Bing hosted *The Grand Award of Sports* on ABC-TV from the New York World's Fair on March 10. Kathryn and Col. John Glenn were the guests.

Bing Crosby was a happy choice to conduct ABC's "Grand Award of Sports" last night. The program was telecast live from the World's Fair, and might have died there, but for Crosby's natural, friendly, folksy and sometimes funny commentaries. He's clever enough to do as little as possible so you don't weary of him, and just enough so you know he's around and keeping a hand on the steering wheel. Even the scripted quips were delivered as if they were his own.

Along with the live portion of the show were film clips of outstanding performances and commercials - at least one of which cut Bing off in mid-sentence. Another came too late, leaving him staring pop-eyed into the camera. But that's the charm of live TV. Bing was assisted by his lovely wife Kathryn. At the point the network cut him off in mid-sentence in favor of the commercial, Bing remained his imperturbable self. "How do you like that?" he remarked. "I'm talking to myself."
(World Telegram & Sun, March 11, 1965)

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker looks at the new releases



COMPACT DISCS

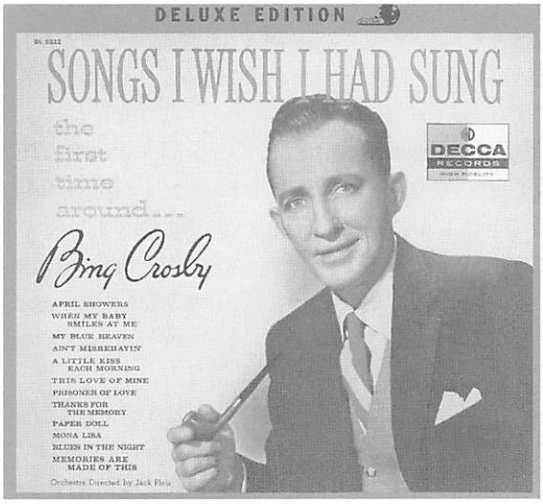
When I wrote about the new issues from Bing Crosby Enterprises for the last issue I had not heard them and had inadequate information about the origins of many of the recordings, so I believe it is appropriate to re-visit them.

As the first twelve tracks on each of "Some Fine Old Chestnuts" and "Songs I Wish I Had Sung" are straight from the original similarly titled issues I will waste no space in re-listing them. However, for the remaining tracks it is worthwhile listing and noting origins in order that potential purchasers will know what they are getting and what gaps they might be able to fill. Starting therefore with track 13 in each case -

Some Fine Old Chestnuts (60th Anniversary Deluxe Edition) [CD] HLC/Universal Music Typically sub $12 (US) £13-14 (UK) Also available as an MP3 download

13. Painting the Clouds with Sunshine *(Chesterfield Oct. 17 1951 & Jan. 9 1952) (a)* / 14. Bright Eyes *(Chest. Nov. 14 1951) (b)* / 15. Avalon Town *(GE Mar. 19 1953) (b)* / 16. Sometimes I'm Happy (with Helen O'Connell) *(GE Jan. 17 1954) (b)* / 17. I Can't Believe That You're In Love With Me *(GE Mar. 14 1954) (b)* / 18. Hallelujah *(GE Jan. 24 1954) (b)* / 19. I Can't Give You Anything But Love (Rehearsal) *(Chest. May 11 1952) (b)* / 20. I Can't Give You Anything But Love *(GE May 2 1954)* / 21. I Never Knew (I Could Love Anybody) (take 2) (*GE Jan 22 1953 & June 11 1953) (a)* / 22. I Never Knew (That Roses Grew) *(GE Mar. 14 1953) (b)* / 23. After You've Gone (take 2) *(for TV Special, recorded Feb 19 1954) (b).*

"I Can't Give You Anything But Love", track 20 is said to be unissued but it is identical to the version on the download MP3 "virtual" CD "Shall We Dance" of 2011 except for some brief introductory "studio business".



Songs I Wish I Had Sung The First Time Around (Deluxe Edition) [CD] HLC/Universal Music Typically sub $12 (US) £13-14 (UK) Also available as an MP3 download

13. Thank Heaven for Little Girls *(Crosby – Clooney Show Mar. 2 1960) (a)* / 14. You'll Never Know *(Ford Road Show Nov. 1957) (a)* / 15. At Sundown *(Ford Road Show Nov. 1957) (a)* / 16. Cocktails for Two *(BC Show Aug. 8 1955) (d)* / 17. Way Down Yonder in New Orleans *(GE Apr. 2 1953 & Apr. 23 1953) (a)* / 18. Mandy, Make Up Your Mind *(GE Mar. 26 1953) (a)* / 19. 'Deed I Do *(GE May 14 1953) (a)* / 20. Lady of Spain *(GE Feb. 5 1953 & May 28 1953) (a)* / 21. Heart of My Heart (with The Four Aces) *(Feb. 21 1954) (a)* / 22. A Kiss to Build a Dream On (*Chest. Oct. 31 1951) (a).*

Key (for both CDs) (a) = not previously officially issued (though some tracks have appeared on "unofficial" CDs, several times in the case of "Lady of Spain") (b) = never previously issued and never broadcast. (d) = previously issued on Mosaic.

Dates given are broadcast dates except where the tracks are rehearsals or not broadcast, when they are recording dates.

Both issues are very welcome, and in the case of "Songs I Wish I Had Sung" many have long called for issue on CD. All tracks are well engineered and the additional tracks are well selected. All, apart from one sourced from TV, are from radio and sound fresh. The gaps left after the issue of the Mosaic set and "The Crosby Clooney" 2 CD set of the sessions for radio with Buddy Cole are slowly being addressed. I'm not totally sure that the off-mic studio business included on a few tracks adds anything to the enjoyment; indeed I think that it could grow wearisome with repetition. That apart I think the issues are very good and should get a warm response from many collectors. Where radio recordings have been issued previously on "unofficial" CDs they will have been copied from the broadcast distribution discs or possibly even off air. For these issues it is pretty certain that they are taken from the studio tapes and therefore will be of better audio quality and will not have added audience noise.

American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered - The Soundtrack [CD] HLC/Universal Music Typically sub $13 (US) £13-14 (UK) Also available as MP3 download.

1. I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams (rehearsal) *(May 1938)* / 2. Star Dust *(1931 (a))* / 3. A Fine Romance (with Dixie Lee) *(a)* / 4. Medley: Mississippi Mud / I Left My Sugar Standing in the Rain (with Harry Barris and Al Rinker) *(The Chase & Sanborn Show July 4, 1943.)* / 5. Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams (outtake) *(June 9 1939. Decca DLA-1767C)* / 6. San Fernando Valley *(KMH January 13 1944)* / 7. You're Just in Love (with Judy Garland) *(Chest. March 7. 1951)* / 8. Moonlight Becomes You *(June 1942, Paramount radio publicity disc)* / 9. Sweet Leilani *(KMH Dec. 7 1944)* / 10. Swinging on a Star *(KMH April 27 1944)* / 11. Put It There, Pal (with Bob Hope) *(KMH June 15, 1944)* / 12. White Christmas *(1942) (a) (TAKE A)* / 13. It's Been a Long, Long Time (featuring Les Paul) *(KMH Feb. 14, 1946* / 14. Temptation *(KMH Feb. 8 1945)* / 15. Just One More Chance *(Chest. Jan. 3 1951)* / 16. The Second Time Around *(TV – Oldsmobile March 20. 1961)* / 17. The Oldest Established (with Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra) *(TV "BC Show for Lever Brothers" Feb. 15, 1964)* / 18. Now You Has Jazz (with Louis Armstrong) *(TV "Edsel Show" Oct. 13, 1957)* / 19. Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho (with The Crosby Brothers) *(TV Oldsmobile Feb. 29, 1960)* / 20. Medley: I'm Glad I'm Not Young Anymore / I Wish I Were in Love Again (with Maurice Chevalier) *(TV Oldsmobile Mar. 20, 1961)* / 21. Where the Blue of the Night *(a) (from "A Musical Autobiography")* / 22. I Surrender Dear *(Chest. Jan. 17, 1951)*
a = Commercial issue.
Whilst the titles are familiar, many of the recordings used are refreshingly different, starting with the rehearsal of "Pocketful of Dreams" with guitar accompaniment and a few comments. The version of "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" is the well-known "blow up". We also have several items from TV, which provides for further interesting differences. Much TV sourced material that I have heard from the 1960s has tended to have poor audio but there are no problems here – all sounds very good and clear. This makes a superb companion to the DVD of the broadcast noted below.

Bing Sings The Irving Berlin Songbook [CD] HLC/Universal Music Typically sub $13 (US) £16 (UK)
Also available as MP3 download
1. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Connee Boswell) *(a)* / 2. Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon *(KMH April 28 1938)* / 3. When the Midnight Choo-Choo Leaves for Alabam' *(KMH July 7 1938)* / 4. When I Lost You *(KMH July 14 1938)* / 5. Tell Me Little Gypsy (*KMH April 11 1940)* / 6. All By Myself *(a)* / 7. Always *(KMH Nov. 9 1944)* / 8. Let's Start the New Year Right *(a)* / 9. Abraham *(a)* / 10. Kate (Have I Come Too Early, Too Late?) *(Philco Dec. 3 1947)* / 11. Blue Skies (featuring Les Paul) *(Philco Oct. 30 1946)* / 12. I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm *(BC Show Dec. 20 1954 (b)* / 13. I Got the Sun in the Morning *(Philco Oct. 16 1946)* / 14. Easter Parade (with Trudy Erwin) *(KMH Apr. 18 1946)* / 15. Some Sunny Day *(GE Dec. 16 1952)* / 16. Call of the South (with Gary Crosby) *(GE Dec. 1953)* / 17. Play a Simple Melody (with Dick Powell) *(Chest. Nov. 8 1950)* / 18. There's No Business Like Show Business (with The Andrews Sisters and Dick Haymes) *(a)* / 19. Puttin' on the Ritz *(c)* / 20. A Man Chases a Girl (Until She Catches Him) *(BC Show Mar. 14 1955) (b)* / 21. The Song is Ended (But the Melody Lingers On) *(c)* / 22. White Christmas (with Michael Bublé) *(Bing from TV Dec 14 1971, Bublé overdubbed 2012)*
(a) = Commercial issue (b) = previously issued on the "Mosaic" set. (c) = from the Longines "Songs I Love" LPs 1968.
When I first saw details of this issue I felt that it was likely to be the best of the crop. The selection of songs written by one of the greats from the Golden Age could hardly be better though some might quibble over the precise selection. Personally I would have liked fewer tracks from commercial issues, which have been widely available. Several tracks are from early-ish radio and are welcome for that alone. Two tracks are from one of the major neglected sources, the "Longines" recordings. But I fear something has gone wrong with the engineering. The audio balance between some tracks varies considerably, with the last four tracks particularly recorded at much higher levels than others, with the final track over-recorded to the point that there is peak level distortion. Elsewhere there is distortion on some of the bass notes (particularly on the plucked bass on tracks 1 and 2 which is certainly not present on my taped copies). This might not be very obvious unless heard on wide range equipment. Overall then, whilst I welcome the issue from the point of view of parts of the selection, Bing's performance, and the fact that some are drawn from less familiar sources, I do have reservations about the audio quality. This can only be partly ameliorated by varying playback volume. Again we have several tracks which, whilst not officially issued, have in fact been available on CD, sometimes on several issues. "I Got the Sun in the Morning" from the first Philco show,

has for example been on at least four CDs, though the comment made earlier about usage of original studio tapes remains true at least from 1946 on.

Bing Crosby Christmas Favorites – Somerset Entertainment Limited $7-$8 (US) Around £9 (UK)
1. White Christmas / 2. Medley – Deck the Halls – Away in a Manger – O Little Town of Bethlehem – The First Noel / 3. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer / 4. Silent Night / 5. Sleigh Ride / 6. Little Drummer Boy / 7. Jingle Bells (slow version) / 8. Adeste Fideles / 9. A Marshmallow World (with Ella Fitzgerald) *(Chesterfield Nov. 29 1950)* / 10. Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow *(appears to be KMH, Feb. 14 1946)* / 11. I'll Be Home for Christmas *(appears to be KMH Dec. 7 1944)* / 12. Here Comes Santa Claus (with Peggy Lee) / 13. The White World of Winter / 14. The Christmas Song / 15. Just What I Wanted for Christmas / 16. Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town (from "So Rare" CD 1) / 17. The Secret of Christmas (labelled "It's Christmas Time Again") /18. It's Christmas Time Again (labelled "The Secret of Christmas")
In an earlier "Keeping Track" I mentioned the issue of CDs prepared by Bing Crosby Enterprises or affiliates but actually issued through others under licence. They follow a pattern – there is no publicity of any sort from BCE themselves, they usually contain tracks already released by BCE on their regular issues, but they add in the odd "bonus" of something a little out of the ordinary. In no case is there any identification of the sources of the recordings; only titles being given. That makes it difficult to identify just what is what from the straight listing on internet sites: the issues tend to look like just another compilation of popular titles, no different from dozens of others. This is another, brought to my attention by Jim McCaffery, to whom many thanks. The release date is shown as 2011 on the sleeve but every internet listing gives 2013 and it is still available from the usual internet sources. All the tracks are taken from "The Crosby Christmas Sessions" CD from Collector's Choice CCM2161 of 2010, except where shown. The other tracks are as noted and of possible interest to some keen collectors, at the cost of much duplication. The KMH tracks sound extraordinarily good for such sources.

DVD and BLU-RAY

American Masters: Bing Crosby Rediscovered - Thirteen Productions LLC. Typically $14.50 (US) £10:25 (UK)

Region 1. Aspect 16:9- 1.85:1
Whilst "revisiting" recent issues I must mention this DVD again. Having now watched it I can only echo the thoughts already expressed elsewhere, mainly in reviews of the original PBS broadcast. It is a very worthy view of Bing without descending to adulatory praise. It does not sidestep the issues with son Gary – they are confronted and debunked in a calm and reasoned way. Several seasoned commentators give authoritative comments on a variety of matters, and there is interesting comment from members of the family. Bing is seen and heard in action and at leisure at different stages of his life, in some cases with clips that will be new to many. The disc benefits from "extras" in the form of interview clips which were not in the PBS broadcast, and which in my view would have been a justification for extending the length of the broadcast itself. I think this disc should be in everyone's collection and made compulsory viewing for the "Bing beat his sons" brigade.

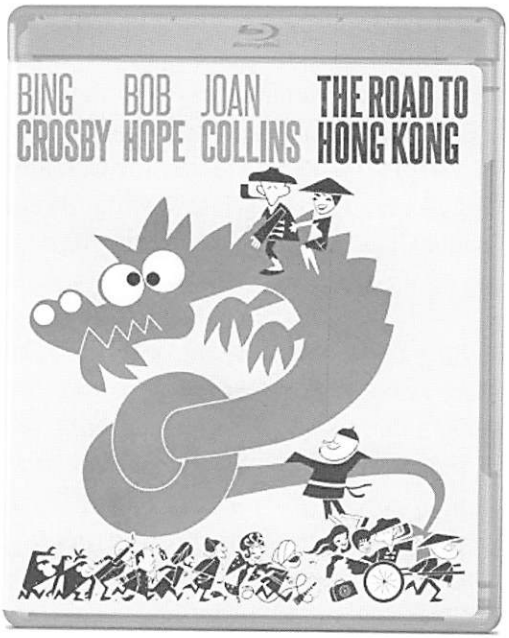
I understand why the regional locking codes exist but am baffled why they are used for issues such as this. I doubt that anyone other than the makers have any rights in any regions, and doubt that there is any intention of issuing it for any other regions. In the UK I can purchase it and I can watch it but am condemned to doing so via my computer. Is there any point in locking the issue to Region 1?

New issues

Holiday Inn – Universal Studios Blu-ray Around $15 (US), around £17 (UK)

Region: oddly the US versions are said to be region free whilst UK sites state region B/2
Aspect 4:3 – 1.33:1
I mentioned the (then) future release of this on Blu-ray in Bing #167. Full details have since come to hand, and it contains an unusual feature – a "play it anywhere" facility, which permits remote streaming (onto suitable players). The downside is that the feature is time limited to May 2016 and involves registration. Judging from comments on some websites a few users have experienced problems with this. Apart from that the disc contains, from what I can judge, all the features included in the three disc colour DVD set of some years ago. The "colorization" of the

original B & W movie was in my view a stupendous achievement giving brightness and sharpness in a quality that seemed unbelievable. I can hardly imagine how Blu-ray can improve on that



The Road To Hong Kong - Olive Films - Blu-ray around $20 (US) (DVD version around $18) (Prices not yet quoted for UK)

Region A/1. Aspect Ratio: 16:9 – 1.66:1

I fear that the fun and flair that infected the earlier "Road" films was fading by the time this, the last of them, was made, but I'm sure that those without a copy will want to complete the set. Dorothy Lamour was relegated to what I can only describe as fourth lead with Joan Collins usurping her normal place but there are some interesting guest appearances. Early reports on picture and sound quality are reassuring and there are no "black bars" with the 16:9 ratio. The film is of course in black and white despite the impression given by the cover.

Robin and the 7 Hoods – Warner Home Video – Blu-ray Around $15 (US) UK not yet announced

Region A/1. Aspect ratio 16:9 – 1.77:1 Issue date May 5th

The "Rat Pack" in full flow. Great fun, though some have detected some constraints on the part of some players caused by external crises during the filming. A success nonetheless, possibly not in the top rank but there are some memorable scenes and songs. Who can forget the hilarious night club transformation to chapel complete with Bing condemning the evils of "Mr Booze", or Frank and Dean assisting Bing with his "Style"? One that I'll be getting to replace my VHS tape.

Reissues

Late in 2014 a number of DVDs were issued (or rather reissued) in Universal's "Vault" series of DVD-R (recorded to order). I'm not a fan of this format but I suppose it fills a niche. Prices shown by Amazon US are immediately sub $15.

Titles noted are "Here Come the Waves", "Mississippi", "Waikiki Wedding", and "We're Not Dressing".

Meanwhile Warner Brothers, in their "Archive" series have reissued "Just for You" paired with "Here Comes the Groom", again listed at under $15. Oddly the "Paramount" labelled version from ten years or so ago, with an almost identical cover, is listed on the same site at $36:98. Take your pick!

Sony have come along with "Pennies from Heaven".

All are Region 1 though most are available also in the UK at around the £10 - £11 mark with no mention that some are CD-R.

I see also that Bob Hope's "The Princess and the Pirate", with Bing in a small guest part, has been reissued.

Format changes

There has been mention in some previous issues of BING about the changes in the way that music is distributed. In my lifetime there have been numerous different formats, though only four have had any lasting and deep penetration as a means of popular music distribution – the 78 rpm shellac disc, the microgroove vinyl 45 and 33 rpm disc, cassette tape, and CD. But the world is changing again and there have been several mentions in BING of digital downloads and streaming. It seems that these methods are becoming so embedded that they now count for the purposes of sales charts. In addition, artists can no longer rely on album sales but have to undertake more varied approaches.

Early last year Billboard Biz reported that in the US - *"for the third time this year — and only the fourth time ever — the year-to-date total sales of digital albums have exceeded those of CDs. - - - - so far in 2014 through the week ending Feb. 2, a total of 22.99 million albums have been sold. Of that total, 11.18 million were downloads while another 11.10 million were CDs. (An additional 710,000 were vinyl LPs and other physical configurations, like cassettes.)"*

The UK is following suit. But it is not just a question of downloads overtaking CD sales. Individual downloads are themselves being surpassed by streaming. This appeared in an article by Neil McCormick in the "Daily Telegraph" published in London on December 13th 2014 *"...Album sales continued to slide, with 2014 looking likely to establish an all-time low, suggesting a loss of faith in long-format popular music. But single-track downloads also went into decline for the first time. The real heavyweight downloads are being delivered by streaming services such as YouTube and Spotify, most of which are free. In June, Bastille's Pompeii was revealed to be the UK's most streamed track, listened to online more than 26 million times. To put that in context, the UK's biggest-selling single of all time, Elton John's 1997 version of Candle in the Wind, has sold 4.91 million hard copies. . . Recorded music is becoming a loss leader: successful artists make their money through advertising, sponsorship, live tickets and merchandise...Today's challenge is to create through social media a sense of intimacy with the audience, to involve them so thoroughly in your life that they will talk about you even when there is nothing to talk about.....Taylor Swift's combined Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. Vevo and Tumblr audience is in excess of 135 million. Her YouTube views number in the billions."*

For those of us not yet fully immersed in this digital age I must explain that a download is the transfer of a digital file onto your playing device, which you can then play repeatedly. "Streaming" is real-time playing over the internet, like listening to the radio. Unless you take special steps to record the stream it is not captured for later plays.

I'm not convinced that comparisons between album sales and numbers of tracks being streamed is valid. Nonetheless the relative volumes are clearly changing. I still feel the need to handle something solid and read background information on sleeves (nice 12 inch square ones where the print is actually large enough to read easily for preference).

Richard Baker **bakerstonb@gmail.com**

Historian proposes to rename Sprague to Bing Crosby Way

Jenica Villamor, writing on KREM.com on March 9 told us all about it.

SPOKANE, Wash. - A group of people are working to change the name of Sprague Avenue to Bing Crosby Way.

Group members said the goal is to recognize and celebrate the famous musician whose career started in Spokane. But some businesses between Browne's Addition and Division would have to make some changes to accommodate that.

Organizers have been gathering signatures from businesses for this petition.

While most businesses are on board, others raise questions about how much this could cost. They are worried about changing their addresses and signs.

Bill Stimson, a local historian and a professor at Eastern University helped launch this idea. He said Bing Crosby is an iconic musician who spent a lot of his time on this street. He thinks the Bing Crosby Theater is a local attraction, so renaming the street could help the theater district stand out even more.

His goal is to rename Sprague Avenue to Bing Crosby Way between Browne's Addition and Division.

"Up and down this street I can show you six or eight brand new restaurants within the last couple of years," said Stimson. "This is coming a nightlife district and it probably needs a little more pizzazz than Sprague Avenue."

Some businesses don't like the idea though. Dana Matthews, the owner of Studio One isn't a big Bing Crosby fan. He said changing the address would mean paying for new business cards and signs. Cards alone are probably around a hundred dollars.

"It's more of a hassle than a huge expense for us but it's one that we don't necessarily want to have to go through," said Matthews.

"I think it's a great idea, I think it honors Spokane's most famous citizen and favorite son," said Ron Wells, owner of Wells and Company Commercial Properties.

Wells owns several buildings along Sprague. He said honoring the musician is worth it. Though he said changing addresses on checks could cost several hundred dollars.

Organizers behind the petition know some businesses are concerned, but they are planning to fundraise money to pay for businesses to change their signs.

Right now a few businesses are against the idea but at least 20 shop owners are on board.

Stimson plans to collect more signatures before bringing this to the City. He hopes we are all calling Sprague Avenue "Bing Crosby Way" as early as next year.

(Editor: Well done, Bill! We all hope that you will be successful.)

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